NATION

Govt to form panel for doctors' safety

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

Govt cuts tax on crude oil to ₹2,100/tonne

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

Zirkzee scores on debut for Man United in 1-0 win over Fulham

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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K'taka Guv sanctions CM's prosecution in MUDA scam

Won't quit, will battle it out legally, asserts Siddaramaiah

BENGALURU, 17 AUG

Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot on Saturday granted sanction for prosecution of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in connection with Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment 'scam', giving a major jolt to the nearly 15 month old Congress government.

Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who is also the State Congress chief, denounced the Governor's action and vowed to fight the move politically and legally.

The Governor accorded sanction under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 for the commission of the alleged offences as mentioned in the petitions of activists Pradeep Kumar SP, TJ Abraham and Snehamayi Krishna.

Shivakumar slammed the Governor's move as 'unconstitutional' and 'undemocratic', and asserted that the entire party and the government solidly stood behind Siddaramaiah as he categorically dismissed BJP's demand for Chief Minister's resignation.

Siddaramaiah too ruled out his resignation and said he has done no wrong to step down.

Complainant ready for legal battle against CM

Activist TJ Abraham, who is one of the complainants on the Mysuru Urban Development Authority site allotment 'scam' against Siddaramaiah, said he would approach the special court for public representatives and plead before it to take cognisance of the sanction granted by Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot to prosecute him.

"We will submit this permission before the special court requesting the judge to take cognisance of it or refer it under 156(3) of CrPC. I will do it on 21 August," Abraham told reporters. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

K'taka Cabinet condemns Guv's decision

The Karnataka Cabinet on Saturday condemned the Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot's decision to grant sanction for prosecution of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment 'scam'. Terming the action as "politically motivated", Siddarmaiah said: "We will wage a legal fight." "The Cabinet has condemned the Governor's decision to sanction prosecution against me as illegal and anti-Constitution", the Chief Minister told a press conference after a special Cabinet meeting. *—PTI*

'GUVS CREATING ISSUE IN STATES NOT RULED BY BJP'

BENGALURU, 17 AUG

In the wake of Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot granting permission to prosecute Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the MUDA compensatory site allotment scam, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday said BJP appointed governors are creating trouble for the non-BJP ruled states.

He, however, maintained that he had to see why Gehlot granted permission to prosecute the Karnataka CM.

"I have neither seen it nor know the details of what the notice is about. I have also not seen the reasons cited for permission. I cannot say now whether the notice is right or wrong," Kharge told reporters in Bengaluru.

The Congress president said, "One more thing is that everywhere the BJP appointed governors, be it in West Bengal, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu or wherever there is a non-BJP government (in the states), they are creating more trouble." *—PTI*

MUDA SCAM TIMELINE

The MUDA scam controversy surrounds Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife, Parvathi, as a primary beneficiary of fraudulent site allotment

- **1992:** Initial notification issued to acquire a land totalling 3.16 acres belonging to one Ninga bin Javara to form 3rd phase of Devanur Layout in Mysuru
- **1998:** Final notification issued to acquire the land. But later the acquisition was denotified
- **2001:** The denotified sites are allotted again
- **2003:** The land was restored in the name of original holder
- **2004:** Siddaramaiah's brother-in-law Mallikarjunaswamy buys the exact land for agricultural purpose, which he later changes it to non-agricultural purposes
- **2010:** He gifts the land to his sister Parvathi, who is Siddaramaiah's wife
- **2014, June:** Parvathi seeks compensation in lieu of her land being used up by MUDA during Siddaramaiah's tenure.
- **2020:** MUDA decides to give alternative sites on 50:50 basis to Parvathi. As a result, Parvathi will get half the land back in the form of developed plots
- **2021:** She petitions again seeking alternative sites
- **2022:** She gets 14 plots
- **2023, October:** The government scraps the 50:50 scheme
- **2024:** Siddaramaiah seeks compensation of Rs 62 crore and claimed that the land was wrongfully taken
- **14 July:** State government sets up one-man inquiry commission
- **24 July:** Speaker UT Khader denies the permission to discuss MUDA issue in Assembly
- **26 July:** TJ Abraham* seeks Governor's Thaawarchand Gehlot's consent for CM's prosecution
- **1 August:** Cabinet urges Governor to withdraw show-cause notice to the CM. Siddaramaiah denies allegations
- **17 August:** Governor gives the consent to start the investigation against the CM

WHO IS TJ Abraham?

Abraham is an anti-graft activist and an advocate. He filed petitions against former chief ministers Dharam Singh, BS Yediyurappa and HD Kumaraswamy

Do not undermine Gaza ceasefire deal, warns Biden

WASHINGTON, 17 AUG

United States President Joe Biden has said that a Gaza ceasefire deal is now in sight and warned parties in the Middle East to not undermine the ongoing negotiations to reach an agreement that would see the release of captives held by Hamas in exchange for Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails. Biden told reporters on Friday that a deal was "much, much closer" than before the talks began, but he also cautioned that "we're not there yet". Previous efforts by the Biden administration to bring about a ceasefire in Gaza have failed and criticism of the president has surged as Washington appears unwilling to use leverage with Israel. *—AP*

>>>More on Page 6

26/11 accused Rana 'extraditable to India': US court

WASHINGTON, 17 AUG

In a huge setback to Tahawwur Hussain Rana, a US court has ruled that the Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman could be extradited to India where is wanted for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack carried out by Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists. Ruling on an appeal filed by 63-year-old Rana, a panel of Judges of the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit affirmed the District Court in the Central District of California's denial of his habeas corpus petition challenging a magistrate judge's certification of his as extraditable to India. Rana has the option of appealing against the ruling. He still has not run out of all legal options. *—PTI*

School stabbing in Udaipur leads to communal violence

JAIPUR, 17 AUG

Mobile internet was suspended for 24 hours in several areas of Rajasthan's Udaipur and all schools were ordered to remain shut after a Class-10 student allegedly stabbed another boy at a government school, triggering communal violence in the city, officials said.

The incident took place on Friday, they said, adding that the student injured in the attack is undergoing treatment at the district hospital while the accused is under detention.

The house of the accused boy has been razed by the district administration using JCB machines, the officials said. The demolition was carried out in the presence of police personnel.

All government and private schools in Udaipur have been ordered to remain shut until further orders in view of the law-and-order situation, he said. A team of three doctors has been sent from state capital Jaipur to Udaipur by a special plane for the treatment of the injured boy, the collector said, adding that his condition is stable.

"Our first priority is to save the life of the victim. A team has reached to treat him on the directions of the chief minister. The condition of the boy is stable. Both the communities have assured the administration that peace will be maintained," he said.

Divisional Commissioner Rajendra Bhatt issued an order suspending mobile internet services for a period of 24 hours from 10 pm on Friday in Udaipur city and the Bedla, Badgaon, Bleecha, Debari, Eklingpura, Kanpur, Dheekli and Bhuwana areas.

According to police, members of some Hindu outfits gathered at Madhuban in the city to protest. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

- The house of the accused boy has been razed by the district administration using JCB machines, according to the officials

WAQF BILL: 1ST MEET OF PARL PANEL ON 22 AUG

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

The first meeting of the Parliament's joint committee on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill will be held next week.

The committee, chaired by BJP member Jagdambika Pal, will meet representatives of the ministries of minority affairs, and law and justice on 22 August, a notice from the Lok Sabha secretariat said.

The representatives from the minority affairs ministry are also expected to brief the committee on the "amendments proposed on the Bill".

The Bill is the first major initiative from the BJP-led NDA government aimed at reforming the registration process for Waqf properties through a centralised portal.

It proposes several reforms, including establishing a Central Waqf Council alongside state Waqf Boards with representation to Muslim women and non-Muslim. The Bill was introduced on 8 August and referred to a joint committee of Parliament after a heated debate, with the government asserting the proposed law, did not intend to interfere with the functioning of mosques and the opposition calling it a an attack on the Constitution. *—PTI*

KOLKATA HORROR

Doctors' strike cripples OPDs country-wide

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Doctors held protests at many places in the country on Saturday against the alleged rape and murder of a trainee woman doctor at a hospital in Kolkata and demanded safety for healthcare professionals at workplaces.

Outpatient department services remained non-functional and elective surgeries were also not conducted at hospitals in the two states but emergency services were not affected, according to the protesting doctors.

Meanwhile, doctors in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Assam, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Mizoram, and Nagaland among other states joined the 24-hour strike called by the IMA.

In the national capital, major private hospitals shut down their OPDs, elective surgeries and IPD services.

Healthcare services were severely affected with many patients claiming that they could not find doctors at hospitals for consultations.

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has given a nationwide call for the withdrawal of non-emergency services for 24 hours from 6 am on Saturday.

The IMA also sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention in realising their five demands, including a central law to check violence against healthcare personnel and declaring hospitals safe zones with security.

On Saturday, the Union health ministry said representatives of all stakeholders, including the state governments, will be invited to share their suggestions with the committee as it urged the doctors to resume their duties. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 2 & 4

Doctors hold placards during a protest at Victoria Hospital in Bengaluru on Saturday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Mamata Banerjee is protesting to divert people's attention from this issue. She should resign because she has failed to handle the situation.

-Nirbhaya's Mother

WB REVOKES TRANSFER OF DOCTORS AMID MEDICO'S RAPE-MURDER ROW

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

The West Bengal government has revoked the transfer order for 42 professors and doctors from various medical colleges and hospitals across the state, an order that had been issued on Saturday.

The state's Health Secretary explained that the transfers were part of a "routine exercise" and that the necessary approvals were obtained prior to the incident of rape and murder of a woman PG trainee doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital on 9 August.

The government's decision of massive reshuffle amid the ongoing protests drew an ire of the doctors' associations and the Opposition BJP, calling it a conspiracy and an attempt to "scare" senior healthcare professionals. "We have revoked the order now," the Health Secretary said.

According to sources, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee instructed the Health Secretary to cancel the transfer order.

Earlier in the day, they had issued a transfer order affecting 42 professors and doctors across the state.

—Salar with Agencies

Doc brandishes pistol during march, held

A case has been registered against a doctor in Gujarat's Amreli city for allegedly waving his licensed pistol while addressing doctors and medical students assembled to protest the Kolkata rape-murder, police said on Saturday. The incident took place around 9.30 pm Friday in Rajkamal Chowk for a candle march, said Chirag Desai(DySP). *—PTI*

HEARTBREAK TO HAPPINESS

Vinesh Phogat returns to hero's welcome

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Celebrated wrestler Vinesh Phogat on Saturday received a grand welcome on her return to the country with hundreds of supporters gathering outside the IGI airport, showing immense solidarity with her.

Stars such as Bajrang Punia, Sakshi Malik and panchayat leaders received Vinesh, who endured a heartbreaking exit at the Paris Olympics where she was disqualified for being overweight on the day of her 50kg final. Heavily garlanded, Vinesh stood in an open Jeep and thanked all the supporters. Congress leader Deepender Hooda accompanied Vinesh and offered her sweets. "I thank the entire country for support," she said, her hands folded in humility.

There was a thick security cover as Vinesh, who was found 100 grams overweight at the Olympics, landed in the national capital. Vinesh's caravan left for her native village Balali in Haryana and on the way she met her supporters, positioned at different spots. Hooda presented a mace, a 'symbol of victory' to Vinesh, who got emotional and was consoled by her husband Somvir.

In a series of twitter posts, Hooda praised the 29-year-old Vinesh for her fighting spirit.

"In our eyes, you have been a winner in the past and will remain so in the future too. Your courage, struggle and determination have not only won the hearts of crores of countrymen but you are an inspiration to crores of youth of the country," read one of his tweets. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 8

- Stars such as Bajrang Punia, Sakshi Malik and panchayat leaders received Vinesh, who endured a heartbreaking exit at the Olympics

Vinesh Phogat arrives in New Delhi, on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

BJP demands CM's resignation in MUDA scam

BJP State President BY Vijayendra says Siddaramaiah's resignation would allow a transparent probe

State BJP unit along with its NDA partner JD(S) had taken out a foot-march from Bengaluru to Mysuru from 3 - 10 August targeting CM Siddaramaiah over the MUDA scam **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

BENGALURU, 17 AUG

BJP on Saturday demanded the resignation of the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah saying he has no moral right to stay in power after Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot granted permission to prosecute him in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment 'scam'.

The party, along with its NDA partner JD(S), had taken out a foot-march from Bengaluru to Mysuru from 3 August to 10 targeting Siddarmaiah over the 'scam'.

"Siddaramaiah has no moral right to continue as Chief Minister," the Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, R Ashoka told reporters here.

"The Congress government in Karnataka is corrupt, which believes in loot. The government here functions like the ATM for Delhi (party high command). No development works have taken place for the past 15 months. There is no money to fill potholes," Ashoka alleged.

BJP State president BY Vijayendra said the Chief Minister's resignation would allow a transparent and unbiased investigation.

Vijayendra said the Governor has exercised his constitutional powers to authorise legal action on the MUDA 'scam' complaint against the Chief Minister.

"Given the substantial evidence and serious allegations of corruption and favoritism within the Congress government, it is crucial that the Chief Minister steps down," he said.

Meanwhile, Member of Parliament Yaduveer Krishnadutta Chamaraja Wadiyar, Krishnaraja BJP MLA T S Srivatsa, former MP Pratap Simha, State OBC Morcha chief and other BJP leaders demanded Siddaramaiah to tender resignation for his post owning moral responsibility in their separate, their separate tweets, posts in their social media accounts.

BJP MP and former chief minister Jagadish Shettar too said Siddaramaiah should take "moral responsibility" and resign from his position.

"It is left to Siddaramaiah whether he will remain in the post till the prosecution starts or resign immediately but I would say that he should resign on moral grounds and pave the way for an impartial probe," Shettar said.

Union Minister of State for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Shobha Karandlaje too asked the Chief Minister to step down.

—PTI & Salar News

'Sanction is for probe, not for prosecution'

Bengaluru, 17 Aug

The sanction granted by Governor Thawarchand Gehlot against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in MUDA 'scam' under Section 17A of Prevention of Corruption Act was for investigation, not for prosecution, said former advocate general of Karnataka BV Acharya on Saturday.

"The sanction is solely for investigation, as no police officer can probe a public servant without the sanction of a competent authority who is the Governor as of now," Acharya said, emphasising that impartial investigations should follow. About the demand for the resignation of the Chief Minister, he said: "There is no legal requirement for a sitting Chief Minister or Minister to resign during an investigation. Even when Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal faced similar circumstances, he did not step down, even with an arrest warrant against him."

—Salar News

Congress workers protest in Mysuru against Governor

MYSURU, 17 AUG

- Congress and AHINDA workers led by MK Somashekar and KS Shivaramu held a protest separately in Mysuru. They alleged that governor's decision was politically motivated

Congress workers on Saturday staged a protest here against the permission granted by Governor Thaawar Chand Gehlot to prosecute Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the MUDA alternative site 'scam'.

Raising slogans "down down anti-people BJP and JD(S), down down to BJP agent governor" and holding placards "Go back Governor" in Kannada, the Congress workers alleged conspiracy against the AHINDA (an acronym for minorities, backward classes, Dalits and Adivasis) leader. They also set tyres on fire as a mark of protest in Siddaramaiah's home district.

They also held semi nude protest, formed a human chain and blocked the road for some time.

Congress and AHINDA workers led by MK Somashekar and KS Shivaramu held a protest separately in Mysuru. They alleged that the governor's decision was politically motivated and warned that such a decision would cause a problem in the society. KPCC spokesperson M Lakshman accused the governor of acting like an agent of State BJP and JD(S) leaders.

Shivaram accused the Governor of acting like an agent of the Union Government, puppet under the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Mysuru District Congress President BJ Vijaykumar said Congress activists will intensify the protest in all taluk and district headquarters urging the President to call back the Governor from the State and the party will be holding "Go Back Governor " protest from Sunday. *—Salar News*

Act of political vendetta by Centre: Surjewala

BENGALURU, 17 AUG

Congress General Secretary and Karnataka in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala on Saturday dubbed the permission granted by Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot to prosecute Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the MUDA alternative site scam as an act of "political vendetta" by the PM Narendra Modi-led government.

He emphasised that Congress was blessed by crores of Kannadigas and won a decisive mandate in the 2023 Assembly elections to serve the people. PM Modi and the BJP are unable to fathom their loss in the state and have tried every trick in the book to defame and destabilise the

Congress government. He further alleged that the 'Machiavellian' conspiracy of the PMO/Home Ministry/BJP Leaders has three facets -- Try to steal thevote and the

mandate of the people of Karnataka, decisively given in favour of the Congress party, by using the office of a ragdoll Governor.

The second is to attack the Congress government in order to accomplish the BJP's evil design to stop the five Congress Guarantees, benefitting over five crore Kannadigas.

The third is "attack the Backward Class/SC/ST and marginalised sections by a fabricated design to tarnish the image of India's senior most Backward Class Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. Such fabricated and manufactured conspiracies will get shredded to pieces in the people's court." *—PTI*

"The entire State, Congress party be it legislators or cabinet stand behind Siddaramaiah. He is my CM, he will be the CM. We stand solidly behind him. The party will also have a proper programme to support his case."

—DK Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister

"Karnataka Governor's decision to sanction the prosecution of CM has been orchestrated by the Central Government. Raj Bhavan is being misused as BJP's tool to undermine a democratically elected government."

— Priyank Kharge, IT-BT Minister

"The investigating agencies will now have to start the process of prosecution. Needless to say, one cannot expect the CM to continue in office while agencies reporting to him, are investigating charges against him."

— BJP MP Tejasvi Surya

"The Chief Minister has emerged stronger. The more you target him, he will grow tall, he will become popular and people will stand behind him. He is doing a good job by serving people. Unethical conspiracy of BJP is now proven."

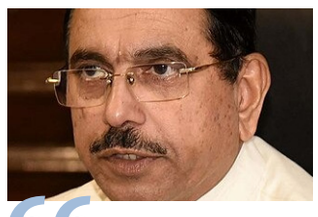
— Dinesh Gundu Rao, Health Minister

"We had categorically explained with minute details following the governor's showcause notice, how he (CM) has been framed... even if the Governor grants permission then we naturally feel that there was a pressure from the top."

—G Parameshwara, Home Minister

"The MUDA Scam is a purely personal allegation against Siddaramaiah, his wife and family. It is about private land they own. He should fight it as an individual, not as CM by involving the state government machinery."

— Lahar Singh Siroya, BJP MP



"Those in high positions of power should have respect for the law and the Constitution. The Governor has taken appropriate action in this regard. The Chief Minister should fully cooperate with the investigation."

— Pralhad Joshi, Union Minister

Veerannapalya to Hebbal Circle road closed for repairs

BENGALURU, 17 AUG

The Bengaluru City Traffic Police has issued an advisory for the temporary closure of the service road from Veerannapalya to Hebbal Circle due to pothole repairs by the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP). The repair work is scheduled from 18 to 21 August. During this period, the service road will be closed to the public from 1000pm to 6.00am. Commuters from Veerannapalya to Hebbal Circle are advised to use the main carriageway of the Outer Ring Road as an alternative route. Authorities have requested public cooperation during these maintenance activities to help ensure smoother traffic flow. *—Salar News*

Koramangala PG owner booked in murder case

BENGALURU, 17 AUG

The owner of a paying guest (PG) facility in Koramangala, where a woman from Bihar was attacked on 23 July, has been booked for negligence. Koramangala police have registered a case against the PG owner, Shyam Sunder Reddy, under Section 125 of BNS Act for negligence and endangering life and personal safety. Kriti Kumari, 24, was murdered by Abhishek Ghosi, a 24-year-old from Madhya Pradesh. Ghosi entered the PG and attacked Kriti in her room, stabbing her several times and slitting her throat before fleeing. Police investigations revealed that a lapse in security allowed Ghosi to enter unnoticed. *—Salar News*

Doctors seek justice in Kolkata medico's rape

BENGALURU, 17 AUG

Members of Indian Medical Association (IMA) in Karnataka on Saturday joined the nationwide protest condemning the rape and murder of a female doctor in Kolkata.

Seeking justice for the 31-year-old trainee doctor who was allegedly raped and killed in a Kolkata hospital, protest marches were taken out by the doctors in several parts of the southern state.

IMA Karnataka Unit President Srinivasa S said its branches across Karnataka were shut and there were no OPD services anywhere. "All we want is justice for this young female doctor who was brutally raped and killed. Just like other professionals, doctors are also working in sensitive areas and so, we want a central law to safeguard doctors," he said. Their other demands include - setting up safe zones and restrooms for doctors in hospitals who are working round the clock and sufficient number of CCTV cameras installed inside every hospital.

In Bengaluru, the agitation took place at the IMA office in Chamarajpet and at Freedom Park in Bengaluru where more than 1,000 doctors from government and private hospitals participated. "This brutal act is not just an attack on one individual; it's an attack on our profession and our values," said Dr Sirish Shivaramaiah, President of Karnataka Association of Resident Doctors (KARD).

Medical students hold placards in solidarity against the alleged rape in Kolkata at St Martha's hospital in Bengaluru on Saturday **PHOTO: SALAR**

Medical students protest at Victoria Hospital in Bengaluru; Indian Academy of Pediatrics and the Indian Medical Association doctors at Kolar on Saturday **PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD/SALAR**

The protest affected the functioning of government and private hospitals in Bengaluru, Mysuru and Chamarajanagar. Services like OPDs, elective surgeries and modern medicines were affected, while emergency services remained operational, with critical care and trauma units functioning without disruption.

Dr Beere Gowda, President of Indian Academy of Paediatrics Kolar urged the Central government to instruct all state governments to provide better facilities for the doctors at their work place.

—PTI & Salar News

Medical students protest against the rape and murder of Kolkata doctor at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Saturday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASASD**

State to address safety in hospitals on Tuesday

MANGALURU, 17 AUG

Condemning the rape and murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata, Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Saturday said a meeting has been called on Tuesday to discuss the steps to be taken to ensure the safety and security of doctors, nurses and all the staff working in hospitals across the State.

Terming the incident as 'ghastly', he said it is a serious issue regarding the safety and security of people working in hospitals, especially women because they constitute more than 50 per cent of the staff. So, there should be a safe environment for them. The Minister said, "On Tuesday's meeting, we will be discussing what is in the existing law, what we can do, what are the protocols and what are the guidelines we need to follow. Based on that, further steps will be taken."

He said "We understand the reason for the protest and they (doctors) can do it, but people should not face any difficulty and all of them have agreed to it and ensure that essential services are running." *—PTI*

GOVT APPROVES 20 PROJECTS WORTH ₹2,280.52 CR

BENGALURU, 17 AUG

The 147th State-Level Single Window Clearance Committee chaired by Minister for Large, Medium Industries, and Infrastructure Development MB Patil approved 20 projects totalling Rs 2280.52 crore on Saturday, officials said.

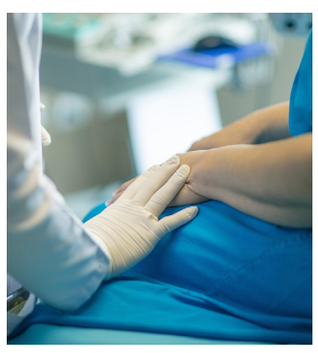
These projects are projected to generate employment for approximately 3,457 people across the State, they said.

According to a statement shared by the Minister's office, among the approved notable projects are Toyotetsu India Auto Parts Pvt Ltd and ILV South Warehousing Parks Private Limited, which plan to invest Rs 450 crore and Rs 423 crore respectively. Toyotetsu India Auto Parts Pvt Ltd is investing in new 4th plant in Bidadi to cope with Innova Hycross demand to support TKML. Aoyama Seisakusho Co. has plans to invest Rs 210 crore in establishing an automotive fasteners production facility at Vasanthnarsapura.

During the meeting, Patil approved six major large and medium projects with a total capital investment more than Rs 50 crore, amounting to Rs 2,025.71 crore, which is expected to create employment opportunities for around 2,440 people, it stated.

13 new projects with capital investments ranging between Rs 15 crore and Rs 50 crore, totaling Rs 214.81 crore, have been approve. Furthermore, one additional capital investment project worth Rs 40 crore has also been approved.

"In total, the 20 projects approved will bring in investments of Rs 2,280.52 crore and generate employment for 3,457 people," the statement added. *—PTI*



Dengue cases in City cross 10K mark this year

BENGALURU, 17 AUG

Bengaluru has reported over 10,000 dengue cases this year, as per data from the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and the Bengaluru Urban district. BBMP has confirmed 10,039 dengue cases, marking a significant surge since January.

Additionally, Bengaluru Urban District has recorded 323 cases, bringing the City-wide total to 10,362.

Speaking to **Salar News**, Dr Susheela Appachu, a General Physician and Gynaecologist practising near Pulikeshi Nagar, stated, "A significant number of patients with high-grade fever often test positive for dengue. The most common symptoms include high fever, abdominal pain, bleeding gums and nose, vomiting, blood in vomit or stools, and extreme tiredness. It's crucial to be cautious about our environment, as food and water can carry these diseases. Anyone who has visited dengue-prone areas should get tested immediately to prevent further complications."

Dr Asima Banu, Principal and Chief Virologist at Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute, Kalasipalya, told **Salar News**, "Out of every 10 patients with flu-like symptoms, around six are diagnosed with viral fever. Some exhibit signs of dengue, often experiencing a drop in platelet count, indicating a vector-borne illness." *—Salar News*

Court to pronounce order against Lalu, Tejashwi

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

A Delhi court is likely to pronounce on 24 August its order on whether to take cognisance of a supplementary chargesheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) against ex-Railway Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav, his son and former Bihar deputy chief minister Tejashwi Prasad Yadav and eight others in the alleged land for job scam case. Special Judge Vishal Gogne on Saturday reserved the order on the prosecution complaint (ED's equivalent to a chargesheet) after hearing the arguments from the probe agency. The ED told the court that there was sufficient evidence against the accused persons to prosecute them. The supplementary chargesheet was filed before the court on 6 August. The ED filed its cases based on an FIR lodged by the Central Bureau of Investigation.—*PTI*

BJP targets enrolling 10 crore members

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Senior BJP leader and Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday exhorted the party leaders to take the party's ideology to all corners of the country, expressing confidence of its strong electoral prospects in future. Addressing a BJP meeting, where the party decided to embark on its membership drive from 1 September, Shah noted that people have repeatedly expressed their faith in its governments in the states and at the Centre, while rejecting the Congress, sources said. At a press conference, BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra said the party aims to make more than 10 crore members in the drive, which will not cover the states going to the polls in the coming months. The party's membership strength was 18 crore after the last such exercise and Patra expressed hope that it will be crossed when the process is over everywhere. It may be noted that the party is expected to elect a new president after the drive is over in at least half of the states. —*PTI*

Cong MLA taken into custody in Balodabazar case

DURG, 17 AUG

Congress MLA Devendra Yadav was taken into custody from Chhattisgarh's Durg district on Saturday by police probing the 10 June violence in Balodabazar city, an official said. Several supporters of Yadav gathered outside his residence in Bhilai Nagar area and raised slogans after word spread about the police's action. Yadav is being brought to Balodabazar for further action, said Balodabazar Superintendent of Police Vijay Agrawal. Police had summoned Yadav at least three times to record his statement in the Balodabazar arson case but he didn't turn up, following which he was apprehended. Unidentified persons had vandalised 'jaitkham' or 'victory pillar', a sacred symbol worshipped by the Satnami community, near the Amar Gufa at Giroudpuri Dham in the Balodabazar-Bhatapara district on the intervening night of 15 and 16 May this year. —*PTI*

NIA files charge sheet against 2 Naxals in 2018 case

PATNA, 17 AUG

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a charge sheet against two dreaded Naxals for their involvement in the abduction and killing of a civilian in Bihar in 2018, an official statement issued on Saturday said. The accused have been identified as Anil Yadav alias Ankush alias Lavkush of Gaya district, Bihar and Pramod Mishra alias Sohan Da alias BB Ji of Aurangabad district of the state, both members of the banned terrorist organisation CPI (Maoist), it said. Yadav and Mishra were notorious "Naxal terrorists with various criminal cases registered against them in different police stations of Bihar and Jharkhand", the NIA said in its statement. —*PTI*

Let's work unitedly to confront challenges: PM to Global South

He says terrorism, extremism and separatism threats to societies

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also elaborated on the importance of cooperation in the area of Digital Public Infrastructure *PHOTO: PTI*

- In his opening address at the third edition of the Voice of Global South Summit hosted by India virtually, Modi said India will make an initial contribution of USD 25 million to the 'Social Impact Fund' that aims to develop digital public infrastructure (DPI) in the Global South.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday called on the countries of the Global South to work unitedly in dealing with food and energy security crises and challenges of terrorism as he flagged concerns over consequences of "uncertainties" around the world.

In his opening address at the third edition of the Voice of Global South Summit hosted by India virtually, Modi said India will make an initial contribution of USD 25 million to the 'Social Impact Fund' that aims to develop digital public infrastructure (DPI) in the Global South.

The Prime Minister reaffirmed India's commitment to sharing its capabilities with the Global South or the developing countries to promote mutual trade, and inclusive development, and to achieve sustainable development goals.

Modi said there has been an "atmosphere of uncertainty" around the world and it has not yet fully come out of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, adding new challenges to development are being faced due to wars.

"We are already facing the challenges of climate change, and now there are also concerns about health security, food security, and energy security," he said.

"Terrorism, extremism and separatism remain serious threats to our societies. Technology divide and new economic and social challenges related to technology are also emerging," the prime minister said.

He said the global governance and financial institutions formed in the last century have been unable to fight the challenges of this century.

"It is the need of the hour that the countries of the Global South unite, stand together in one voice and become each other's strength. Let us learn from each other's experiences."

"Let us share our capabilities. Let us together take our resolutions to fruition. Let us together get recognition for two-thirds of humanity," Modi said.

In the last few years, India has been positioning itself as a leading voice, flagging concerns, challenges and aspirations of the Global South or the developing nations, especially the African continent.

As G20 president last year, India focused on issues like inclusive growth, digital innovation, climate resilience, and equitable global health access with an aim to benefit the Global South.

Modi also elaborated on the importance of cooperation in the area of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). —*PTI*

'RESERVATION SCAM'

BJP govt depriving minorities from reservation: Kharge

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Mallikarjun Kharge *PHOTO: PTI*

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday alleged the BJP is deliberately making recruitments in jobs in a manner that the SC, ST, OBC classes can be kept away from reservation.

He asserted it is necessary to fully implement the provisions of economic, social and political justice contained in the Constitution and that is why the Congress is demanding a caste census for social justice. On X, Kharge said, "BJP, which has ripped apart the Constitution, has made a double attack on reservation!"

"Today the Modi government has issued an advertisement to fill at least 45 posts of Joint Secretary, Directors and Deputy Secretary at the Centre through lateral entry. Is there SC, ST, OBC and EWS reservation in this?" Kharge alleged.

"Under a well-planned conspiracy, the BJP is deliberately making such recruitments in jobs so that SC, ST, OBC classes can be kept away from reservation," the Congress president alleged.

The "reservation scam" in the appointment of 69,000 assistant teachers in Uttar Pradesh has now been exposed by a decision of the High Court, he claimed.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had raised the voice of the deprived candidates by writing a letter to the Prime Minister in the "reservation scam" in Dalit and backward classes in March 2024, he said.

"The Yogi government had filled these posts by doing injustice to the candidates in which the constitutional right of reservation of Dalit and backward classes was snatched from them," Kharge alleged. "Now we know why the Union Minister, who is a BJP ally, drew the attention of the government to the irregularities in job reservation," he said, without naming anyone. —*PTI*

BJP leader, several workers join National Conference

JAMMU, 17 AUG

- The Spokesman termed the joining of the BJP workers as a "significant boost" to the party ahead of the assembly elections scheduled to be held in three phases beginning 18 September

A senior BJP leader along with dozens of party workers joined the National Conference here on Saturday, a party spokesman said.

BJP OBC J&K state secretary and president of Bhartiya Modi Army Sukhjit Singh and numerous workers were welcomed into the party fold by National Conference president Farooq Abdullah at his residence here, the spokesman said.

The Spokesman termed the joining of the BJP workers as a "significant boost" to the party ahead of the assembly elections scheduled to be held in three phases beginning 18 September.

Welcoming the new entrants into the party fold, Abdullah asked the party cadre to gear up for the elections and to make people aware of the key achievements of the National Conference.

He laid stress upon strengthening of party base at the grassroots level to ensure a strong and united front in the elections.

Abdullah, a former chief minister, emphasized the party's commitment to the development and prosperity of Jammu and Kashmir and assured that his party will continue to work tirelessly for the welfare of people. Among those who joined the National Conference include nine retired army personnel and several former government employees, the spokesman said. —*PTI*

ADANI-HINDENBURG ROW

Congress demands SEBI chairperson's resignation

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Madhabi Buch *PHOTO: PTI*

Congress on Saturday cited a media report which flagged alleged conflicts of interest against SEBI chairperson Madhabi Buch and said her continuance as the head of the capital markets regulator is "untenable".

Opposition said Buch must resign and a full Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) investigation must be conducted into the Adani "mega scam". Congress General Secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh cited an article by The Morning Context which raises issues of Buch's alleged conflicts of interest.

The media report raises questions such as has Buch recused herself from all matters involving companies that private equity firm Blackstone has a stake in and how many Blackstone companies find a place on that recusal list.

"The SEBI chairperson's conflicts of interest have already made a mockery of the Supreme Court-mandated SEBI investigations into the violations of securities laws by the Adani Group," he said.

The senior Congress leader said The Morning Context has just brought to light other conflicts of interest relating to the SEBI chairperson.

"The Chairperson's continuance in her role is untenable. She must resign, and a full Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) investigation must be conducted into the Adani mega scam," the Congress General Secretary said.

His remarks come days after Hindenburg Research launched a fresh broadside against market regulator SEBI chairperson Madhabi Buch, alleging she and her husband had stakes in obscure offshore funds used in the Adani money siphoning scandal. —*PTI*

KC Venugopal *PHOTO: PTI*

Venugopal to head Parliament's Public Accounts Committee

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Senior Congress leader KC Venugopal will head the Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC), which keeps a close eye on government expenditure, according to the Lok Sabha Secretariat.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla also constituted four other parliamentary panels, including Estimates and Public Undertakings committees which will be chaired by BJP leaders.

Lok Sabha Secretariat announced the constitution of parliamentary committees. The Committee on Welfare of OBCs will be headed by Ganesh Singh of BJP. His party colleague Faggan Singh Kulaste will head the Committee on Welfare of SCs and STs. —*PTI*

Govt breaking promises, planning to privatise C'garh steel plant: Cong

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Jairam Ramesh *PHOTO: PTI*

- Congress leader said, "On 19 October, 2023, Swayambhu Chanakya reiterated the Prime Minister's promise that the NMDC's Bastar Steel Plant won't be privatised."

Congress on Saturday claimed the government has gone back on its promise and is finalising plans to privatise the Nagarnar Steel Plant in Chhattisgarh's Bastar after "failing to heed the words" of the State's political leadership.

The Opposition party's general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh posted on X a media report that claimed the Union Ministry of Finance is likely to invite financial bids for Chhattisgarh-based NMDC Steel (NSL) in the next two months.

In the same post, Congress leader said, "On 19 October, 2023, Swayambhu Chanakya reiterated the Prime Minister's promise that the NMDC's Bastar Steel Plant won't be privatised."

Former BJP chief minister Raman Singh had written to the prime minister in April 2017, objecting to the privatization of the plant, he said.

"After failing to heed the words of the state's political leadership, and going back on their own promises, the non-biological PM and his government are now finalizing plans to sell the Nagarnar Steel Plant. Who may well buy it is another story," Ramesh said.

He also shared a media report from October 2023 quoting Home Minister Amit Shah as saying that the National Mineral Development Corporation-owned Nagarnar Steel Plant will not be privatised. —*PTI*

'Kerala did not prevent Hema Committee report'

T'PURAM, 17 AUG

Saji Cherian *PHOTO: PTI*

The Kerala government did not prevent the release of Justice K Hema Committee report, which studied issues faced by women in the Malayalam film industry, state Culture Minister Saji Cherian said on Saturday. Cherian said that the State Information Commission and the Kerala High Court directed the State Public Information Officer (SPIO) to release the report after redacting certain portions of it.

"The SPIO has been authorised to release the report. The officer will do so within the stipulated time. Is the time over? If it is not done within the time given, it can be questioned in the High Court," the minister said in response to queries as to why the report was not released on Saturday.

The minister made it clear that neither the state government nor its Culture department nor the film industry have any role with regard to releasing the committee's findings. "The government is not against release of the findings," he said.

His reaction comes in the wake of reports that the release of the committee's findings have been delayed again as the government was waiting for the outcome of an actress' plea against its publication. Renjini, has moved the High Court reportedly raising concerns about the content of the report.

Cherian said that neither the government nor the Culture Department said the committee's report would be released. "If the SPIO said that the report will be released today at 11 am and the officer did not do so, you ask them," he said reporters. —*PTI*

UPSC advertises 45 posts across Ministries at Centre

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Forty-five specialists will soon be joining key posts of joint secretaries, directors and deputy secretaries in different central ministries as part of the Modi government's ambitious plan to infuse fresh talent to further improve ease of governance.

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on Saturday advertised 45 posts -- 10 of joint secretaries and 35 of directors/deputy secretaries -- to be filled through the lateral entry mode on contract basis. It is the biggest tranche of lateral recruitment being undertaken by the Centre, an official said. —*PTI*

SEEKS WOMEN'S SUPPORT

Shinde launches 'Ladki Bahin' scheme

PUNE, 17 AUG

According to Maharashtra government 1 crore women are expected to benefit from the scheme *PHOTO: PTI*

The Mahayuti government in Maharashtra on Saturday formally launched the ambitious "Majhi Ladki Bahin" scheme for eligible women, with Chief Minister Eknath Shinde hinting at doubling the monthly stipend from Rs 1,500 to Rs 3,000 if the alliance is voted to power in elections.

More than 1 crore women are expected to benefit from this scheme whose launch coincided with Rakshabandhan festivities beginning Monday.

The Shiv Sena-BJP-NCP government, facing a tough Assembly polls battle against the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi in coming months, came up with the "Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin" scheme, months after a debacle in Lok Sabha elections in Maharashtra.

The scheme, modelled on the Madhya Pradesh government's "Ladli Behna Yojana", provides monthly Rs 1,500 assistance to the married, divorced, and destitute women in the 21-60 age group with Rs 2.5 lakh annual family income ceiling.

The scheme was launched by the Chief Minister Shinde and Deputy Chief Ministers Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar, who belong to BJP and NCP, respectively at the glittering event attended by women in large numbers.

Notably, the Opposition parties from MVA, including Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT), have accused the State government of trying to buy women's votes and questioned the "paltry" allocation of Rs 1,500 per month.

Mahayuti allies believe the potential goodwill created by the cash transfer initiative will boost its poll prospects in Maharashtra.

Shinde hit back at the MVA for dubbing the Rs 1,500 allocation grossly inadequate. The Opposition bloc had assured an increase in the monthly cash transfer assistance if voted to power. —*PTI*

Health Ministry reviews mpox situation

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

PHOTO: PTI

- Since WHO first declared the outbreak a public health emergency of international concern in 2022, a total of 30 cases were detected in India with the last case being reported this March

There are currently no reported cases of Monkeypox in India even though cautionary measures will be put in place to prevent and control the spread of the disease, the Union health ministry said on Saturday.

At a review meeting held during the day, although the possibility of a few imported cases being detected in the coming weeks was not entirely ruled out, it was assessed that the risk of a large outbreak with sustained transmission is low for India at present. Since WHO first declared the outbreak a public health emergency of international concern in 2022, a total of 30 cases were detected in India with the last case being reported this March, the Health Ministry said in a statement. —*PTI*

GOVT TO FORM PANEL FOR DOCS SAFETY

Representatives of all stakeholders will be invited to share their suggestions with the panel

Doctors protest amid the 24-hour nationwide strike called by Indian Medical Association, in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

The Union health ministry on Saturday said a committee will be formed to suggest all possible measures for ensuring the safety of healthcare professionals.

Representatives of all stakeholders, including the state governments, will be invited to share their suggestions with the committee.

The ministry has requested the doctors agitating across the country over the alleged rape and killing of a resident doctor at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata to resume their duties in the larger public interest and in view of the rising dengue and malaria cases.

Representatives of the Federation of Resident Doctors' Association (FORDA), Indian Medical Association (IMA) and resident doctors' associations of government medical colleges and hospitals of Delhi met the Union health minister in the wake of the Kolkata incident.

The associations have put forth their demands regarding the safety and security of healthcare workers at their workplaces, the ministry said in a statement.

The ministry has heard the demands and assured the doctors' associations of all possible efforts to ensure the security of healthcare professionals. The representatives of the associations were informed that the government is well aware of the situation and sensitive to their demands, the statement said.

It was also observed that 26 states have already passed laws for the protection of healthcare workers. *—PTI*

Dhaka students protest in solidarity over rape incident

DHAKA, 17 AUG

Students at the prestigious Dhaka University in Bangladesh held a protest in solidarity with ongoing demonstrations over the rape and murder of a woman trainee doctor at RG Kar Medical College in Kolkata in the neighbouring country.

The protest, organised under the banner "Awaaz Tolo Nari" (Raise Your Voice, Women), on Friday, took place at the Raju Sculpture in Dhaka University, Dhaka Tribune newspaper reported.

"We are aware of the non-cooperative attitude of the medical college administration regarding the rape case in Upper Bengal," Dhaka Tribune quoted Rahnuma Ahmed Niret, a student from the Department of Physics, as saying at the event.

A group of students also observed the "Occupy the Night" programme at Dhaka University in solidarity with the ongoing protests in India, demanding a fair investigation and justice for every rape case in Bangladesh following the mass uprising. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Indian doctors in UK pen letter to demand justice

LONDON, 17 AUG

A group of Indian doctors and medical students in the UK have issued an open letter this weekend demanding justice for the postgraduate trainee doctor who was brutally raped and murdered at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata.

The letter condemns the "brutal rape and murder of an on-duty female doctor" at the hospital and the "inaction" of the West Bengal government in its response to the incident last week.

"The absence of investment in public infrastructure and safety measures has a disproportionate impact on women, who are already marginalised by the patriarchal social conditions. Instead of supporting their empowerment by creating safe workplaces and efficient judicial mechanisms, government leaders, including Mamata Banerjee, have historically indulged in victim-blaming and misogynist responses," it notes.

"The death of the female doctor at RG Kar Medical College is an indication of the urgent necessity to implement public safety measures and internal complaint mechanisms in all workplaces in the country," it adds.

Further protests are planned in the UK, with a peaceful demonstration by British Indian women doctors at Parliament Square in London, scheduled for 22 August. *—PTI*

Part of another bridge collapses in Bihar

While dismantling, it crashed into the Ganges River, on Saturday **PHOTO: ANI**

BHAGALPUR/KHAGARIA/ PATNA, 17 AUG

A portion of an under-construction bridge in Bihar, which was being "dismantled", crashed into the Ganges river on Saturday, officials said.

The administration made it clear there were no casualties.

Video footage of a slab of the bridge, connecting Bhagalpur and Khagaria districts, has gone viral on social media in which locals, beholding the sight from a distance, can be heard screaming "the structure has collapsed once again".

Notably, portions of the bridge, which would be 3.16 km long once complete, had collapsed earlier in 2022 and again, a year later.

However, when contacted, Khagaria District Magistrate Amit Kumar Pandey asserted that "the entire structure of the under-construction bridge has been deemed to be faulty and it is being dismantled by the contractor as per direction of the Patna High Court".

The incident, which comes in the backdrop of numerous incidents of bridge collapse across the state, many of these taking place a few months back, triggered a political slugfest.

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, a former deputy chief minister who held road construction portfolio till his party lost power in January this year, squarely blamed the Nitish Kumar government for the incident.

Senior BJP leader Vijay Kumar Sinha, the current Deputy CM who holds road construction department, retorted, "Things would not have come to this, had the previous government been vigilant enough". *—PTI*

A DRAMATIC RESCUE

A taxi driver and four traffic cops displayed remarkable alertness and agility to save a 56-year-old woman who was about to fall into the Arabian Sea from Atal Setu on Saturday. **PHOTO: ANI**

Rain havoc continues, 3 killed in lightning strikes

JASHPUR, SHIMLA, SRINAGAR, T'PURAM 17 AUG

Three women were killed and seven others injured in lightning strikes in Chhattisgarh's Jashpur district, officials said on Saturday.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai has expressed grief over the incidents that occurred on Friday and directed the local administration to provide the best possible medical assistance to the injured.

The kin of each of the deceased will be provided with a compensation of Rs 4 lakh, the official said.

Kerala

Heavy downpour and strong winds are predicted across Kerala in the next five days with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issuing orange alert in four districts of the state on Saturday.

Intermittent isolated rains lashed several parts of the southern state today and water levels rose in various rivers, including Manimala and Pamba.

According to the latest update of the IMD, an orange alert, predicting very heavy rainfall, has been sounded in Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Idukki and Ernakulam districts today.

Kottayam, Idukki and Kozhikode and Pathanamthitta and Ernakulam districts were placed under orange alert on Sunday and Monday respectively, it said.

Jammu and Kashmir

Heavy rainfall lashed parts of Jammu and Kashmir on early Saturday morning ending a prolonged period of dry weather in the Union Territory.

Srinagar Meteorological Centre has predicted intense spells of rain at a few places in Jammu and Kashmir with the possibility of heavy rain over a few places in the Jammu division for 19 and 20 August. *—PTI/ANI*

20 Sabarmati Express coaches derail near UP's Kanpur

KANPUR/ NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Twenty coaches of the Sabarmati Express passenger train derailed near Govindpuri station in Kanpur early Saturday after the engine hit an "object placed on the track", rail officials said. There is no report of any loss of life or injury in the accident. The Varanasi-Ahmedabad train derailed between Kanpur and Bhimsen railway station around 2.35am. Rescue and relief operations are underway, officials said. In a post on X, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, "The engine of Sabarmati Express (Varanasi to Amdavad) hit an object on the track and derailed near Kanpur at 02:35 am today."

"Sharp hit marks are observed. Evidence is protected. IB and UP police are also working on it. No injuries to passengers or staff. Train

There is no report of any loss of life or injury in the incident **PHOTO: PTI**

arranged for passengers for onward journey to Amdavad," Vaishnaw added.

Railway Board officials said involvement of miscreants or anti-social elements is being looked into as prima facie it appears that the engine hit an object placed on track.

"We found a foreign material near the 16th coach of the train. Looking at the size of the damaged portion of cattle guard of the engine, it seems that the engine hit this foreign object and derailed," an official said.

"The loco pilot said that some boulder hit the cattle guard (front portion) of the engine which got badly damaged and bent," another official said. On same track at 1.20 am, a Patna-Indore train crossed uninterrupted, Railway Board officials said.

The passengers of the Express (19168) were sleeping when the train stopped after a loud noise. *—PTI*

DELHI HC ISSUES BAN ON USE OF TMKOC SHOW CONTENT

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Delhi High Court has restrained the unauthorised use of name, characters and content of popular TV show 'Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah'.

The makers of the show, which was stated to have been on air for over 16 years with approximately 4,000 episodes, alleged that several entities were using its names, images of characters, etc. for commercial gains by running websites, selling merchandise and even publishing "sexually explicit and vulgar" videos on YouTube.

The court further ordered that YouTube videos, which contain character or material from the show, including pornographic content, were required to be brought down by those making the uploads. *—PTI*

DELHI COACHING CENTRE DEATHS

HC reserves order on accused's bail pleas

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

A Delhi court is likely to pronounce on 23 August its order on the bail applications of four jailed co-owners of a coaching centre basement where three civil service aspirants drowned last month.

Principal District and Sessions Judge Anju Bajaj Chandna on Saturday reserved the order after hearing arguments from the CBI as well as the accused - Parvinder Singh, Tajinder Singh, Harvinder Singh and Sarbjit Singh.

During the arguments, the accused told the court that the incident was an "act of god" which could have been avoided had the civic agencies performed their duties.

Delhi court is likely to pronounce on 23 August its order on the bail applications of four jailed owners of the coaching centre **PHOTO: ANI**

"It was an act of god which happened and it could have been avoided had the civic agencies performed their onerous duties which they have miserably failed to do," the advocate for the accused had told the judge.

The counsel submitted that the basement was not a library but a waiting area for the students before their classes commenced.

The counsel submitted that the basement was not a library but a waiting area for the students before their classes commenced.

The counsel submitted that in order to establish that the deaths were due to negligence, there has to be a direct link between them.

He further told the judge that the four accused were not evading arrest, rather they voluntarily went to the police station after they got to know about the incident.

The Delhi High Court recently transferred the probe from police to the CBI "to ensure the public has no doubt over the investigation". *—PTI*

Malls in Noida, Gurugram get hoax bomb threat

NOIDA, 17 AUG

Several people were evacuated from DLF Mall of India in Sector 18 on Saturday triggering fear of a bomb threat even as the mall authorities said it was a security drill.

The police have not yet issued any statement on the matter.

In a statement issued around 1.35 pm, the DLF Mall of India said the "activity" was a security drill conducted in collaboration with Noida authorities.

In another incident, Ambience Mall in Gurugram was evacuated on Saturday after it received an email claiming that a bomb had been planted on the premises, police said.

The email, which was sent from hiddenbones101@gmail.com, stated, read, "I planted bombs in the building. Every person inside the building will be killed, none of you will escape. You deserve death. I planted the bombs in the building because I hate my life. The people behind this attack are Paige and Nora,"

PHOTO: ANI

Assistant Commissioner of Police, DLF, Vikas Kaushik said nothing suspicious had been found in the search operation so far. *—PTI*

MP man suffering from Chandipura like symptoms dies

INDORE, 17 AUG

A 21-year-old man, who suffered symptoms similar to the Chandipura virus infection, died while undergoing treatment at a hospital in Madhya Pradesh's Indore on Saturday, an official said.

According to the health department, the man's test report from the National Institute of Virology (NIV) confirmed that he was not infected with the virus.

Chief Medical and Health Officer (CMHO) Dr B S Saitya said the man was admitted to a private hospital in the city and died during treatment.

Chandipura virus causes fever and acute encephalitis (inflammation of the brain).

The symptoms of this disease are similar to flu. The disease is spread by vectors such as mosquitoes, ticks and sandflies. *—PTI*

Scare at Lucknow Airport after 'radioactive' alarm

LUCKNOW, 17 AUG

Lucknow Airport became a scene of frenetic activity on Saturday after a shipment containing medicines for cancer patients activated an alarm of radioactive material, according to an official statement. The airport officials swiftly responded to the alarm and alerted authorities. The incident did not impact the flight operations. An official statement issued by Chaudhary Charan Singh International Airport (Lucknow Airport), read, "A shipment containing medicines for cancer patients activated an alarm for radioactive material in the Cargo area of the Lucknow Airport." It added, "The National Disaster Response Force, called in to ascertain the cause of the alarm, has declared the shipment safe. "There was no casualty and there was no threat to life or injury. The Airport operations are running smoothly and have not been impacted," the statement added. *—PTI*

Woman injures man's genitals to halt harassment

THANE, 17 AUG

A 30-year-old man hurried to a hospital when a woman injured his private parts with a metal spatula to thwart his alleged unwanted advances in Maharashtra's Thane district, an official said on Saturday. Accused Anil Satyanarayan Raccha was drunk when he tried to misbehave with the 26-year-old woman at her home in the Bhiwandi area, he said. Police said the Raccha and the woman know each other. Around 4.30 pm on Friday, Raccha went to her house and tried to make sexual overtures. He also allegedly flashed her. To protect herself, the woman raised an alarm, ran to her kitchen and picked up a metal spatula. She struck Raccha with the utensil and injured his genitals, the official said, citing the FIR. A badly injured Raccha rushed out of her house to seek medical help. He has been hospitalised, the official said. The accused has not been arrested as he is still in the hospital, the official added. *—PTI*

UP man throws toddler in drain after 'rape attempt'

MEERUT, 17 AUG

A man allegedly kidnapped a two-year-old girl, attempted to "rape" her and threw her into a drain after the girl's family started chasing him, police said on Saturday. The girl's body was found in the drain this morning, they said. The incident happened on late Friday, when Moish, 20, abducted the minor who was sleeping with her family members outside her house in Sadar area, Superintendent of Police Ayush Vikram Singh said. When the family members woke up, they chased the accused to save the girl from his clutches but Moish threw the girl in the drain and fled, he said. The accused has been arrested and investigation is underway, Singh said, adding that the body has been sent for post-mortem. *—PTI*

NEW GUINNESS RECORD

Joshua Bregmen, 34, a British adventurer has set a new Guinness World Record by skiing off an 18,753-foot cliff and parachuted safely on the land. He surpassed the record of 14,301-foot set by Frenchman Matthias Giraud in 2019

PHOTO: X/@GWR

Khandwa, Betul forests at risk of fires, study warns

Approximately 45 per cent of Khandwa's forest and 50 per cent of North Betul's forest fall into high or very high fire risk zones ***PHOTO: ANI***

Forests in Central India's Khandwa and North Betul divisions are at high risk of forest fires, driven by both human activity and natural factors, a new study has found. The paper has underscored the urgent need for targeted fire management strategies in these areas.

The research, Assessing Forest Fire Dynamics and Risk Zones in Central Indian Forests: A Comparative Study of the Khandwa and North Betul Forest Divisions of Madhya Pradesh, was conducted by Vibha Sahu, a doctoral student at the Indian Institute of Forest Management.

Published on 14 August, 2024 in journal Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, the study analysed forest fire patterns in the Khandwa and North Betul forest divisions of Madhya Pradesh over the past 22 years. The team utilised satellite data from MODIS to monitor and map the fires. The researchers wanted to understand how and where fires start and spread.

The scientists noticed a slight increase in the number of fires, with about three more per year in Khandwa and one more in North Betul. But the bigger picture revealed something more alarming: Approximately 45 per cent of Khandwa's forest and 50 per cent of North Betul's forest fall into high or very high fire risk zones.

In Khandwa, these high-risk areas are mainly in the northern and southeastern parts, including the Khalwa, East Kalibhit, West Kalibhit, Chandgarh and Aonliya ranges. In North Betul, they are located in the northwestern and northeastern regions, such as Shahpur, Betul, Sarni and Bhaura.

The study found significant clustering of fire incidents, suggesting that certain regions are more prone to fires due to factors such as vegetation type, topography and human activity. For example, areas close to roads and with highly combustible forests are more likely to experience fires.

Khandwa's teak-dominated forests are at higher risk compared to the mixed-species forests of Betul, the paper stated. The research used models such as the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to predict future fire risks and categorise areas into five risk levels.

Furthermore, local communities harvest forest resources, such as mahua flowers and tendu leaves, but their collection methods, including burning undergrowth, can inadvertently heighten fire risks.

This study is significant as it helps focus conservation efforts on the areas most vulnerable to fires. By targeting these high-risk zones, forest managers and policymakers can develop better strategies to prevent and control fires, safeguarding both the forests and the people who depend on them.

Lead researcher Vibha Sahu told this author, "Our study shows that Khandwa faces a higher fire risk, underlining the need for targeted planning and resource allocation to manage fire threats effectively." *— Down To Earth*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR ساڈھ

Meet Thailand's youngest PM Paetongtarn

Paetongtarn Shinawatra is the latest political heir from one of Thailand's most powerful, albeit divisive, political dynasties to lead the country.

The 37-year-old, who has never served in government, is the daughter of billionaire tycoon and former leader Thaksin Shinawatra, whose populist appeal has dominated Thai politics for the past two decades.

Her appointment came two days after a Thai court removed her predecessor Srettha Thavisin, from the same Pheu Thai party, after less than a year in power over charges of ethics violation — a move that surprised many.

Pheu Thai's waning popularity

After dominating at the ballots for the past 20 years, the elections in May 2023 underlined how Thailand has moved on and how the "Thaksin factor" has somewhat lost its appeal.

Parties linked to Thaksin won every election in Thailand for the past two decades, but last year Pheu Thai was eclipsed by Move Forward, which rode to success on bold promises of reforming the monarchy and military.

"The middle class and young voters do not care about Thaksin," according to Punchada Sirivunnabood, an associate professor of political science at Thailand's Mahidol University.

And one of Paetongtarn's main challenges is securing the same levels of popularity once enjoyed by her father — a scenario political experts say is unlikely to happen.

"For Pheu Thai to redeem itself, the economy would have to prosper, like double-digit growth rates, and the party also needs to materialize not just one but a few of the policies it promised," Punchada told DW.

Dynastic politics

Paetongtarn will become Thailand's second female prime minister and the fourth member of the Shinawatra clan to take the top job after her aunt Yingluck, uncle-in-law Somchai Wongsawat, and father Thaksin.

The 37-year-old is perceived by many as another Thaksin "proxy."

"[Getting rid of that image] will be extremely difficult," said Punchada.

Political experts have also cast doubt on Paetongtarn's leadership qualities and ability to get Pheu Thai back on its feet.

Lacking political experience?

Known in Thailand by her nickname "Ung Ing," Paetongtarn was one of the three prime ministerial candidates for the party in last year's election, playing a prominent role in campaigning as the party looked to secure backing from Thaksin's supporters.

Paetongtarn studied hotel management at the University of Surrey in England and worked for the hotel arm of the family's business empire before entering politics.

She began working for Pheu Thai as chief adviser for participation and innovation in 2021 and became party leader last October.

Multiple challenges

Thailand's new prime minister will have to overcome the difficult task of reviving the Southeast Asian nation's stagnant economy — a policy area that has long been a hallmark of Thaksin-associated parties.

Srettha made little headway during his tenure. "Pheu Thai's sliding popularity is due to the fact that, a year on, it has not delivered any policies," said political scientist Siripan.

The party's flagship cash handout scheme of a 10,000 baht ($279) "digital wallet" for Thais has faced multiple delays.

"With 25 million Thais already registered to benefit from the scheme, Pheu Thai would face an image crisis if this policy cannot go ahead," Puangthong underlined.

Apart from navigating economic challenges, Paetongtarn must also avoid possible military coups and court rulings that have deposed many Thai leaders in the past.

Pheu Thai and its predecessors do not have a good record of holding onto power. Thaksin himself was overthrown in a coup in 2006. His close ally, the late Samak Sundaravej, lasted only nine months; his brother-in-law Somchai Wongsawat was prime minister briefly in 2008; and his sister Yingluck suffered the same fate in 2014.

Like Srettha's dismissal on Wednesday, these former leaders, who were considered Thaksin's "proxies," were all ousted by Constitutional Court rulings.

"People are unhappy. First it was Move Forward's dissolution, now Thaksin's daughter became prime minister," said Punchada.

The analyst fears that if large-scale protests were to take place, "Thailand could witness yet another military intervention."

—DW News

Paetongtarn Shinawatra is the daughter of billionaire tycoon and former leader Thaksin Shinawatra ***PHOTO: X/@SSINGSHIN***

How Paris 2024 became the most memed Olympics ever

Paris 2024 might go down in history as the most memed sporting event ever. Traditionally, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has focused on broadcast media such as free-to-air television as its primary medium, with rights holders paying big bucks.

In Australia, Channel 9 reportedly paid A$305 million to secure the rights to broadcast the next five games, through to Brisbane 2032.

In previous games, the IOC has also taken a strict approach to sharing and resharing content across platforms. However, this is beginning to change, with the committee unveiling a new social media policy for athletes, coaches and other staff ahead of Paris 2024. Importantly, this new strategy allows athletes to post about their sponsors, which helps them build their brand and make money.

All signs point to the IOC leaning into and encouraging viral social media moments – giving viewers a glimpse of the softer side of the Olympics, including behind the scenes action and athlete life.

We first saw this shift in the Tokyo 2020 summer games (which took place in 2021), with athletes creating and sharing content for fans on social media. One such athlete was the popular TikToker Ilona Maher, a member of the US rugby sevens, who has amassed some 2.3 million followers on TikTok and 3.6 million on Instagram.

In the right hands, social media has massive reach – even if you're not a world-famous athlete like Simone Biles (12.5 million Instagram followers) or Usain Bolt (14.1 million followers on Instagram). Paris 2024 has proven this yet again.

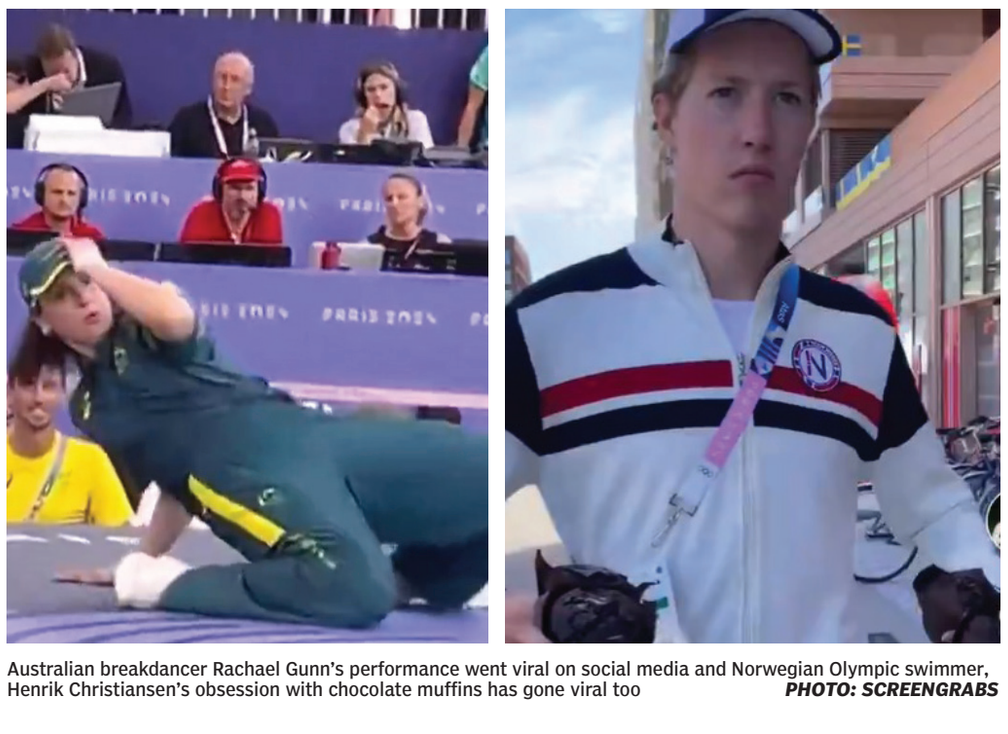
The breakdancer and the muffin man

Perhaps you've heard about the muffin man? No, not that muffin man. I mean the Norwegian Olympic swimmer, Henrik Christiansen who went viral for his extensively documented obsession with the chocolate muffins served in the dining hall at the Olympic village.

Other athletes have jumped in with their own variation on the muffin man meme, such as by filming themselves trying or sneaking off with the infamous muffins.

Viewers at home also got in on the action by creating and/or consuming their own muffins.

The muffin man was quickly eclipsed by Australian breakdancer Rachael Gunn (aka "Raygun"), whose performance produced what can only be described as a meme storm across social media. Raygun's breaking performance quickly drew comparisons to scenes from the Simpsons and Kath and Kim.



Australian breakdancer Rachael Gunn's performance went viral on social media and Norwegian Olympic swimmer, Henrik Christiansen's obsession with chocolate muffins has gone viral too ***PHOTO: SCREENGRABS***

Raygun herself seems to be in on the joke, filming a video with The Inspired Unemployed to the tune of Snoop Dogg's Drop It Like It's Hot.

But why do memes matter for the Olympics?

For starters, the Olympics and Paralympics have been suffering from a bit of an image problem. They are expensive, disruptive and cities are increasingly less likely to bid for them.

The IOC's strict rules around broadcasting rights also limit the reach of footage from the actual games, which risks disengaging young people – especially Gen Z – who don't tune into traditional TV and consume much of their media through social media platforms.

Social media allows the human side of the games to shine through and reminds viewers, as corny as it may seem, of the Olympic spirit and the collective joy we can experience through sport. Meme-making is also a creative and participatory process and engages people beyond a traditional audience model.

Even though the IOC might not be directly producing some of these viral moments, they're definitely creating the conditions for them to occur. And viewing figures from Paris 2024 suggest this strategy is working. The IOC's primary commercial partner, NBC, recorded 34.6 million viewers across its digital streaming platforms and traditional broadcast – a figure that has eclipsed the Tokyo 2020 games.

In the first week of the games alone, the official Olympic social media channels generated 8.5 billion engagements (that's before we got to the memes).

It's the D-O-double-G!

This ratings gold has been further helped by NBC's focus on celebrities and enlisting Snoop Dogg's as Team USA's unofficial mascot.

Snoop appeared at various events, including the equestrian with Martha Stewart – where they both wore equestrian outfits to watch the dressage, fully reported on the official Olympics website. He also inspired many of the Paris 2024 memes – his big name, big personality and expressive face making him the ideal candidate for meme-making younger viewers.

When celebrities such as actor Mariska Hargitay appeared as spectators, the cameras cut to them in the crowd and their interactions with athletes were documented for social media, drawing more eyes to the games.

All these factors have contributed to the impression of a friendlier, more relaxed and engaging competition. It seems the IOC is more aware than ever that allowing people to meme and share footage from the Olympics is good for their broadcast partners and their bottom line. Athletes benefit, too. Since they aren't paid for competing in the games, social media is one way athletes can sustain their careers in what is often a difficult funding environment. It offers a way for them to build their brand, gain partnerships and continue to do what they (and we) love – giving it their all on the world stage. *—The Conversation*

650 people killed in B'desh violence: UN

DHAKA/GENEVA, 17 AUG

Nearly 650 people have been killed in the recent unrest in Bangladesh between July 16 and August 11, the UN Human Rights Office has said in a preliminary report, suggesting a thorough, impartial and transparent investigation into reports of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions.

According to the 10-page report titled "Preliminary Analysis of Recent Protests and Unrest in Bangladesh", nearly 400 deaths were reported between 16 July and 4 August while around 250 people were reportedly killed following the new wave of protests between August 5 and 6, leading to the ouster of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

The available public reports by media and the protest movement itself claimed that between 16 July and 11 August, more than 600 people were killed due to the wave of violence following the Anti-Discriminatory Student demonstrations.

According to the 10-page report nearly 400 deaths were reported between 16 July and 4 August in Bangladesh *PHOTO: PTI*

Several deaths were reported between 7 and 11 August, including those who died while undergoing medical treatment for injuries sustained in the violence, the UNHCR report suggested. Those killed include protesters, bystanders, journalists and several security forces personnel, it said, adding that thousands of protesters and bystanders were injured, with hospitals overwhelmed by the influx of patients.

- Mobs armed with bamboo sticks, iron rods and pipes reportedly assaulted the former prime minister's Awami League Party supporters who had gathered to pay their tributes to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on his death anniversary

The report said the reported death toll was likely an underestimate as information collection faced a hindrance by restrictions on movement due to the curfew and the internet shutdown. Furthermore, hospitals were reportedly prevented by state authorities from providing details of those killed and injured, the report suggested.

On 15 August, mobs armed with bamboo sticks, iron rods and pipes reportedly assaulted the former prime minister's Awami League Party supporters who had gathered to pay their tributes to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on his death anniversary.

The report emphasised the importance of rapidly restoring law and order, as well as the need for effective measures to prevent further loss of life, violence and acts of reprisals. The Bangladesh National Hindu Grand Alliance said the minority community faced attacks. *—PTI*

Committed to holding free & fair elections, says Yunus

DHAKA, 17 AUG

The caretaker government in Bangladesh is committed to ensuring a transition to inclusive and pluralistic democracy and creating an environment in which "free, fair and participatory elections" can be held, its head Mohammad Yunus assured the international community on Saturday.

Yunus, the Chief Advisor of the interim government, said while addressing the third Voice of Global South Summit which was hosted by India in a virtual format. "You all are aware that Bangladesh witnessed a 'Second Revolution' on 5 August 2024, through a mass uprising spearheaded by our valiant students and joined by the masses," the 84-year-old Nobel laureate said, referring to the political turmoil in his country and the resignation of prime minister Sheikh Hasina on 5 August.

Noting that the current interim government led by him was sworn in on August 8, Yunus said, "Our government is committed to ensuring a transition to inclusive and pluralistic democracy and creating an environment in which free, fair and participatory elections can be held."

Yunus assumed charge of the interim government amid ongoing violence and vandalism, including against the minorities. "Our task is now to carry out vital reforms in our electoral system, judiciary, local government, media, economy and education," Yunus said. "I invite you to visit Dhaka soon. Otherwise, you may miss something important. Much of Dhaka has turned into the graffiti capital of the world," he said. *—PTI*

16 killed, 20 abducted in Congo attacks

KINSHASA, 17 AUG

At least 16 villagers were killed and 20 others were abducted in northeastern Congo during attacks by militants with ties to the Islamic State group, a local civil society group said Friday. The assailants with the Allied Democratic Forces staged a series of attacks on locals, some while working on their farmlands, between Wednesday and Friday in Ituri province's Mambasa territory, said John Vulverio, coordinator of the New Civil Society of Congo. "The (death) toll remains provisional, as the fate of 20 others kidnapped remains unknown," he said. Among those kidnapped in the attacks were the mother and sister of Gilbert Sivamwenda, a local government official, local media quoted the legislator as saying. *—AP*

PHOTO: X/@KINLITEMEDIA

Gunmen abduct 20 Nigerian students

ABUJA, 17 AUG

At least 20 Nigerian university students were abducted by gunmen who ambushed their vehicles in the country's north central region, police said Friday. The students were travelling to the south for a conference of medical students when they were ambushed in Benue state on Thursday evening, according to Benue police spokesperson Catherine Anene. The attack happened along Benue's Otukpo road, a notorious hotspot for kidnappings. Such kidnappings have become common in parts of northern Nigeria, where dozens of armed groups take advantage of limited security presence to carry out attacks in villages and along major roads. Most victims are released only after the payment of ransoms that sometimes run into the thousands of dollars. *—AP*

Hurricane Ernesto inundates Bermuda with heavy rains

SAN JUAN, 17 AUG

Hurricane Ernesto began to pound Bermuda late Friday with heavy winds and rain after officials in the tiny British territory in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean opened shelters and closed government offices. The Category 2 storm located 150km south-southwest of Bermuda was packing maximum sustained winds of 155 kph. Ernesto's large eye will likely be very near or over Bermuda early Saturday morning, with significant coastal flooding expected, according to the National Hurricane Centre. "Preparations to protect life and property should be rushed to completion." The storm was forecast to dump between 6 to 9 inches of rain. Forecasters noted that Ernesto was a large hurricane, with hurricane-force winds extending up to 120 kph and tropical stormwinds extending up to 445 kph *—PTI*

Do not undermine Gaza ceasefire deal, warns Biden

US Secretary Antony Blinken to travel to the Middle East today

WASHINGTON, 17 AUG

United States President Joe Biden has said that a Gaza ceasefire deal is now in sight and warned parties in the Middle East to not undermine the ongoing negotiations to reach an agreement that would see the release of captives held by Hamas in exchange for Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails.

Biden told reporters on Friday that a deal was "much, much closer" than before the talks began, but he also cautioned that "we're not there yet".

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to travel to the Middle East on Saturday to continue diplomatic push for Gaza ceasefire deal. Previous efforts by the Biden administration to bring about a ceasefire in Gaza have failed and criticism of the president has surged as Washington appears unwilling to use leverage with its key ally Israel. Biden also said that he spoke with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who he said expressed strong support for the US efforts. In the Qatari capital, Doha, where Qatari, Egyptian and US negotiation mediators are trying to hammer out a deal on Gaza, ceasefire talks were paused on Friday, but are expected to resume next week with the hope of concluding an agreement in Cairo.

US President Joe Biden told that a deal was "much, much closer" than before on Saturday *PHOTO: BBC NEWS*

A senior US official has described the latest diplomatic efforts to end the 10-month violence as the most productive in months. "We made a lot of progress in the number of issues that we've been working on," the official said.

On Thursday, an Israeli delegation and mediators began the latest round in months of talks to end the war in Gaza, which has killed at least 40,000 Palestinians. The Palestinian group Hamas was not directly involved in the talks but was kept briefed on their progress.

At least 10 killed in Israeli attack on southern Lebanon

Israel's military claims it hit a Hezbollah 'weapons warehouse' but Lebanese Health Ministry says residence attacked. Israel's military claimed on its Telegram channel that the air force had struck a weapons storage facility of the Lebanese armed group Hezbollah overnight "in the area of Nabatieh", located about 12km (seven miles) from the nearest point to the Israeli border. Earlier, the military posted on social media that its fighter jets attacked "military buildings" in the villages of Maroun al-Ras and Aita al-Shaab, more than 50km south of Nabatieh city. The National News Agency said the raid hit a brick mill at the outskirts of the northern town of Wadi al-Kfour in theNatabtiyeh district. *—Al Jazeera*

Gaza records first polio case in 25 years

CAIRO, 17 AUG

The threat of polio is rising fast in the Gaza Strip, prompting aid groups to call for an urgent pause in the war so they can ramp up vaccinations and head off a full-blown outbreak. At least one case has been confirmed, others are suspected and the virus was detected in wastewater in six different locations in July. Polio was eradicated in Gaza 25 years ago, but vaccinations plunged after war began 10 months ago. *—AP*

GLOBAL HEALTH EMERGENCY

Humanitarian crisis in Congo helps mpox spiral again

PHOTO: X/@LUCKYLUCKY0971

GOMA, 17 AUG

Sarah Bagheni had a headache, fever, and itchy and unusual skin lesions for days, but she had no inkling that her symptoms might have been caused by mpox and that she might be another case in a growing global health emergency.

She also has no idea where to go to get medical help. She and her husband live in the Bulengo displacement camp in eastern Congo, a region that is effectively ground zero for a series of mpox outbreaks in Africa.

This year's alarming rise in cases, including a new form of the virus identified by scientists in eastern Congo, led the World Health Organization to declare it a global health emergency on Wednesday. It said the new variant could spread beyond the five African countries where it had already been detected — a timely warning that came a day before Sweden reported its first case of the new strain.

In the vast central African nation of Congo, which has had more than 96 per cent of the world's roughly 17,000 recorded cases of mpox this year — and some 500 deaths from the disease — many of the most vulnerable seem unaware of its existence or the threat that it poses. The youngest of those cases was a month-old baby and the oldest a 90-year-old, he said.

Seven million people are internally displaced in Congo, with more than 5.5 million of them in the country's east, according the UN. *—AP*

American businessman and Microsoft founder Bill Gates during flagging off the First India Day celebrations, in Greater Seattle area, USA *PHOTO: PTI*

Bill Gates flags off 1st Indian I-Day celebration

SEATTLE/NEW YORK, 17 AUG

India's ingenuity, from manufacturing safe vaccines to its Digital Public Infrastructure, is helping not just Indians but the whole world, Microsoft co-founder and billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates said as he flagged off the first India Day celebrations in the Seattle area. Gates, Chairman of the Gates Foundation, flagged off the first India Day celebrations in the Greater Seattle area as the Guest of Honour of the Consulate General of India in Seattle on the occasion of the 78th Indian Independence Day. *—PTI*

UKRAINE ORDERS EVACUATION OF PAOKROVSK

KYIV, 17 AUG

Military authorities in the eastern Ukrainian city of Pokrovsk urged civilians to speed up their evacuation Friday because the Russian army was quickly closing in on what has been one of Moscow's key targets for months. Pokrovsk officials said in a Telegram post that Russian troops are "advancing at a fast pace. With every passing day there is less and less time to collect personal belongings and leave for safer regions." Ukrainians have been trying to divert the Kremlin's military focus away from the front line by launching a bold cross-border incursion into Russia's Kursk region. *—AP*

Indian-origin man shot dead by teenage boy in US

WASHINGTON, 17 AUG

A 36-year-old Indian-origin man has been shot and killed after a teenage boy robbed a convenience store in the US state of North Carolina, authorities said.

Mainank Patel, the owner of the Tobacco House store at 2580 Airport Road, died after the shooting on Tuesday morning, the Salisbury Post reported. A juvenile male is in custody for the crime, according to Rowan County Sheriff's Office. Because the young man is a juvenile, deputies are not able to release his name.

The juvenile was arrested Tuesday evening but no additional details have been released. Deputies initially responded to the Tobacco House convenience store in response to a 911 hang-up call, said Captain Mark McDaniel, public information officer for the Rowan County Sheriff's Office.

The victim was taken to Novant Health Rowan Medical Center and then transported to Presbyterian Hospital in Charlotte, where he died as a result of his injuries, the report added.

A security video showed a tall, slender white male running across the store parking lot away from the building. He was wearing black shorts, a black hoodie, a black ski mask and white Nike tennis shoes with burgundy logos, and appeared to have a black handgun in his hand, said McDaniel. *—AP*

Tulsi Gabbard *PHOTO: AP*

Trump picks Tulsi to prepare for debate with Kamala Harris

WASHINGTON, 17 AUG

Gearing up for his debate with US Vice President Kamala Harris, former President Donald Trump, and has brought in the former Democratic congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard to help sharpen his attacks, the New York Times reported citing two people aware with Trump's schedule.

She joined Trump's practice session at the latter's private club and home, Mar-a-Lago. Donald Trump and Kamala Harris are set to face off in the ABC News debate on September 10.

Gabbard, who left the Democratic Party after her 2020 presidential run and has rebranded herself as a celebrity among Trump's base of support, has long been friendly with Trump and was also speculated to be his running mate for some time.

Garbbard's involvement in Trump's debate preparation, was partly because of her own performance in a 2019 Democratic presidential primary debate, when Gabbard eviscerated Harris in a memorable onstage encounter.

Leavitt said the former president has "proven to be one of the best debaters in political history as evidenced by his knockout blow to Joe Biden. He does not need traditional debate prep but will continue to meet with respected policy advisers and effective communicators like Tulsi Gabbard, who successfully dominated Kamala Harris on the debate stage in 2020." *—ANI*

60 DAYS AND GOING ON...

Boeing Starliner astronauts: How will they pass time?

LIVERPOOL, 17 AUG

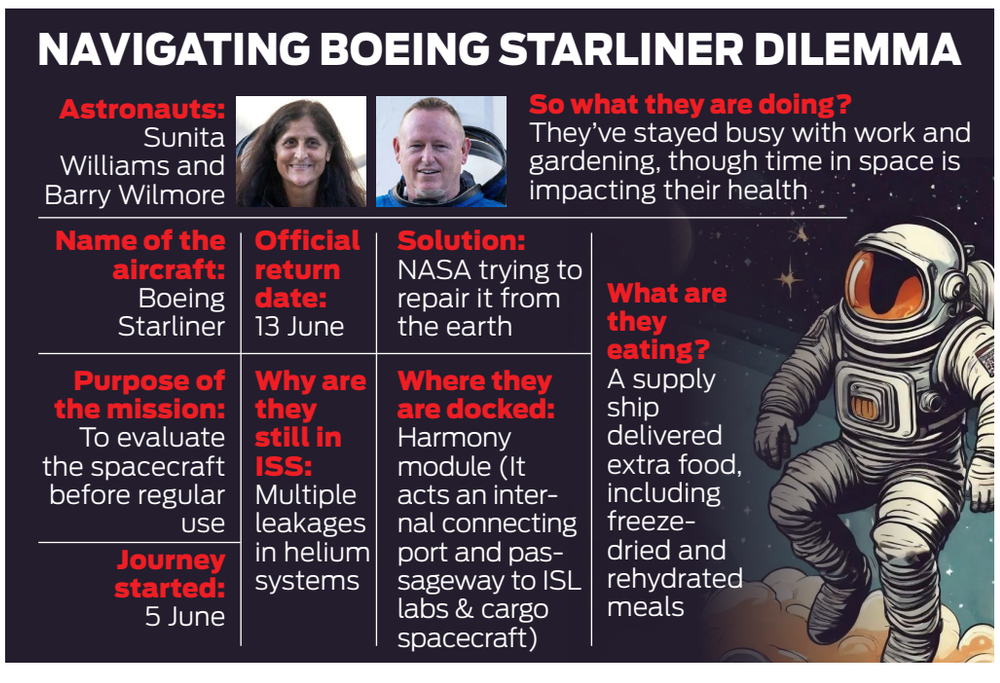
Two astronauts marooned in space may sound like the plot of a Hollywood blockbuster, but for two NASA crew members, it is now a reality. Commander Barry Wilmore and pilot Sunita Williams are currently in limbo on the International Space Station (ISS).

They arrived in the Boeing Starliner spacecraft – the first test of the spaceship with astronauts. Wilmore and Williams were supposed to stay on the ISS for around eight days and return on the same spacecraft. But there is now debate about the safety of Starliner after it experienced helium leaks and thruster problems on its way to the ISS.

For the astronauts stuck on the ISS, anxiety about when they will return, limited opportunities for activities and fewer opportunities to contact friends and families combine to make their wait to return home feel significantly longer than six months – if it should come to that.

Analysis of crew members' experiences indicated that being constantly busy with complex tasks such as scientific research helped time to pass swiftly, according to 80 per cent of crew responses. Only 3 per cent of responses indicated that time actually dragged, and these reports occurred when nights were long and there was little to do.

A key factor of their wait may be their ability to tolerate the uncertainty of when they will return. Wilmore and Williams will spend their time in a space equivalent to the inside a Boeing 747 plane. But better information about "when" things will happen and "why" delays are being incurred can help people to tolerate waiting. *—AP*


NAVIGATING BOEING STARLINER DILEMMA
Astronauts: Sunita Williams and Barry Wilmore
So what they are doing? They've stayed busy with work and gardening, though time in space is impacting their health
Name of the aircraft: Boeing Starliner
Official return date: 13 June
Solution: NASA trying to repair it from the earth
Purpose of the mission: To evaluate the spacecraft before regular use
Why are they still in ISS: Multiple leakages in helium systems
Where they are docked: Harmony module (It acts an internal connecting port and passageway to ISL labs & cargo spacecraft)
What are they eating? A supply ship delivered extra food, including freeze-dried and rehydrated meals
Journey started: 5 June

Omaxe Q1 net loss at ₹147.44 cr on rise in expenses

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Realty firm Omaxe Ltd has posted a consolidated net loss of Rs 147.44 crore in the first quarter of this fiscal year on higher expenses. The company's net loss stood at Rs 106.32 crore in the year-ago period. The total income increased to Rs 385.23 crore in the April-June period of this fiscal year, from Rs 220.85 crore in the corresponding period of the previous year, according to a regulatory filing on 13 August. Total expenses rose to Rs 542.40 crore in the quarter under review, from Rs 352.39 crore a year ago. Omaxe is one of the leading real estate developers in the country. *—PTI*

Satin Creditcare Venture sets up new subsidary

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Microfinance company Satin Creditcare Network has set up a new wholly-owned subsidiary which will offer technological solutions across various industries, a company statement said. The new subsidiary, Satin Technologies Limited (STL), will operate as an independent entity and will have the freedom to innovate and develop the latest technological solutions, Satin Creditcare Network Ltd (SCNL) said in the statement. The subsidiary is well-equipped to meet the evolving needs of businesses in the digital age and will offer solutions across industries but not limited to financial services, the city-based microfinance institution added. STN will develop solutions by leveraging modern technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and Cloud Computing, its director Rupinder Kalia said. SCNL is a leading MFI with a presence in 27 states & union territories and around 90,000 villages. It also offers financial products to Non-MFI segment, comprising loans to MSMEs and affordable loans. *—PTI*

TG govt, ISB allies to build leadership in healthcare

MUMBAI, 17 AUG

The Indian School of Business (ISB) on Saturday said it has collaborated with the Telangana government to launch a new programme specially curated for senior leaders in the Commissioner of Health, Medical and Family Welfare Department (CHFW). This one-year programme aims to enhance leadership and managerial capabilities, enabling effective management of public health institutions across the state, ISB said in a statement. The programme will deepen participants' expertise in healthcare management, drive innovation, and significantly enhance public health delivery systems throughout Telangana. "We have set up a solid base for healthcare development in 2022, and our new healthcare program in partnership with ISB is an extension of our commitment. "We aspire to be exemplary in driving innovation and excellence in health management and will continue to take reformative and pathbreaking steps in our pursuit."*—PTI*

NCLAT: Mitsubishi to encash guarantee from Punj Lloyd

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Allowing the plea of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, the Insolvency Appellate Tribunal NCLAT has set aside the order passed by NCLT, which had restrained the Japanese multinational engineering from encashing the Performance Bank Guarantee submitted by its contractor Punj Lloyd. NCLAT said NCLT "committed an error" by allowing a plea filed by the RP of Punj Lloyd to restrain Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, State Bank of India and other banks who have given counter guarantee to invoke the Bank Guarantee. The matter pertains to the construction of LNG storage tanks in Ennore/Chennai by the state-owned Indian Oil, which has awarded the contract to Mitsubishi. *—PTI*

Govt cuts tax on crude oil to ₹2,100/tonne

New rates will be effective from 17 August

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

The windfall tax on petroleum crude will be reduced to Rs 2,100 per metric ton from Rs 4,600 per ton, according to an official gazette notification. The new rate will be effective from 17 August.

A windfall tax is levied by governments when an industry unexpectedly earns large profits, mainly due to an unprecedented event.

On Friday, oil prices fell by about two per cent, with Brent crude standing below USD 80 a barrel. Brent crude futures fell by around 2 per cent to close at USD 78.37 per barrel in the international market.

The slowing down of the Chinese economy, as widely reported around the world, has affected the crude market. The Chinese economy lost momentum in July when new home prices fell at the fastest pace in nine years, as reported.

Traders around the world are worried about the contraction of demand from top oil importers.

The Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) last week revised the global crude oil demand forecast due to the slow demand from the major oil importer China.

The organisation expected in its recent assessment that oil demand in 2024 will stand at around 135,000 barrels per day.

The windfall tax is typically reviewed every two weeks. The tax, which is revised every fortnight, remains unchanged at zero for diesel, petrol, and aviation turbine fuel.

India started the windfall tax on crude oil producers and on exports of gasoline, diesel, and aviation fuel in July 2022 to regulate private refiners who preferred selling fuel overseas instead of locally to gain from firm refining margins. *—ANI*

Govt also scraps diesel and ATF levy *PHOTO: PTI*

- India started the windfall tax on crude oil producers and on exports of gasoline, diesel, and aviation fuel in July 2022

CBDT TO I-T DEPT

'Check high-value cash dealings at hotels, hospital'

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Rampant cash transactions in business sectors like hotels, luxury brand sales, hospitals and IVF clinics need to be checked in a "non-intrusive" manner, the CBDT has asked the I-T department.

The apex body for direct taxes administration in the country -- the Central Board of Direct Taxes -- has also asked the tax department to undertake "concerted efforts" to recover arrear demands which have been witnessing a "steep rise" since the last financial year.

CBDT recently issued an annual action plan dossier called the central action plan (CAP) 2024-25.

Senior officials told PTI that transactions over Rs 2 lakh in cash were required to be reported through a statement of financial transaction (SFT) by financial institutions but that was not happening.

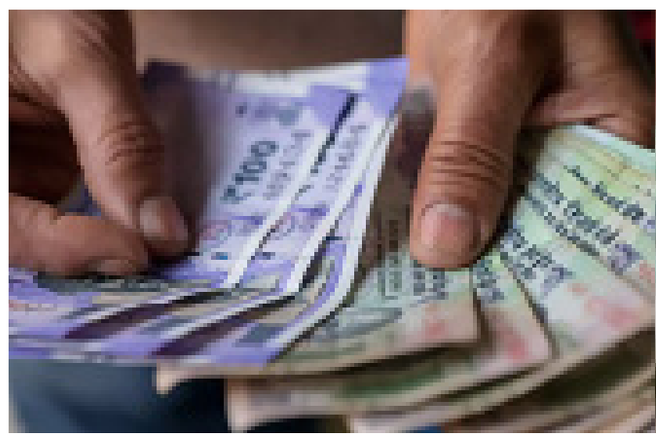
"While examining such reports, it is noticed that the circumvention of these provisions is widely prevalent," the Board told the I-T department.

In any case, it said, "high value" consumption expenditure needs to be verified with information about the taxpayer and therefore, it is imperative to identify the sources which could be involved in possible circumvention.

The department identified some of the businesses, such as hotels, banquet halls, luxury brand retailers, IVF clinics, hospitals, designer clothing stores, and NRI quota medical college seats, where the non-adherence to these rules and large cash transactions was being found.

The Board also declared in the action plan that a "special team" headed by a Principal Commissioner of I-T be formed in each region by September end to act and recover tax arrears from the top 5,000 cases -- about 60 per cent of the total demand of over Rs 43 lakh crore.

—PTI



CBDT recently issued an annual action plan *PHOTO: PTI*

- The department identified some of the businesses, such as hotels, banquet halls, luxury brand retailers, where non-adherence to these rules and large cash transactions was being found

SEBI proposes expansion of sustainable fin framework

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Markets regulator SEBI has proposed expansion of the sustainable finance framework in the securities market by introducing a new category of financial instruments.

This category will include Social Bonds, Sustainable Bonds, and Sustainability-linked Bonds in addition to the current green debt securities. It aims to provide issuers with flexibility in raising funds for projects that align with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) objectives.

In a consultation paper released on Friday, SEBI proposed that issuers, in addition to existing green debt securities, be allowed to raise funds through issuance of social bonds, sustainable bonds, and sustainability-linked bonds. These bonds will collectively be known as ESG Debt Securities.

SEBI said it received representations from market participants including the Confederation of Indian Industry to expand the scope of the regulatory framework pertaining to sustainable finance to include Social Bonds, in addition to existing Green Debt Securities as a mode of raising sustainable finance, in line with global practices.

It has invited comments and suggestions from the public on the consultation paper by 6 September. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

A SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENT

India exports first consignment of fig juice to Poland

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) has facilitated the export of India's first ready-to-drink fig juice to Poland, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said on Saturday.

The fig juice, produced by Purandar Highlands Farmers Producer Company Ltd., was first introduced at the APEDA Pavilion during SIAL 2023 in Greater Noida, New Delhi.

This ready-to-drink fig juice is made from GI-tagged Purandar Figs.

The product has been granted a provisional patent which represents a significant innovation in the agricultural sector in the country.

The export of this fig juice marks a significant achievement in promoting the country's unique agro-products on the global stage, the ministry said in a statement.

The fig juice was also showcased at Macfrut 2024 in Rimini, Italy, with the support of APEDA, further expanding its global reach.

The achievement highlights the potential of Indian agro-products and the crucial role of Farmers Producer Companies (FPCs) in promoting sustainable agricultural practices and exports.

The ministry reiterated its support for the product, stating that since the first export of fresh GI-tagged Purandar Figs to Hamburg in 2022, APEDA has worked closely with smallholder farmers.

This achievement not only showcases the potential of Indian agro-products but also underscores the importance of research and development in enhancing the value of agricultural exports, the ministry's statement read.

—ANI

PHOTO: CBIC WEBSITE

CBIC directs GST officers to consult board on law issues

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

The CBIC has asked GST officers conducting audit to refer to the board those cases where they face issues of conflicting interpretation of provisions of the tax law.

In an instruction to field offices, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) said during the process of audit, a CGST Audit Principal Commissioner may come across a scenario where a taxpayer has followed a prevalent trade practice based on particular interpretation of Goods and Services Tax (GST) law and more than one such interpretation of the law could result in litigation.

Moore Singhi Executive Director Rajat Mohan said industry has been facing significant challenges during GST audits and one of the recurring issues has been the inconsistency in interpretations of GST laws by various audit authorities. These inconsistencies have often resulted in conflicting decisions, leading to increased litigation and uncertainty for businesses.

"This step is crucial in ensuring that a uniform interpretation of the GST laws is maintained across different jurisdictions, thereby reducing the likelihood of unnecessary litigation," Mohan added.

Deloitte India Partner and Leader Indirect Tax, Mahesh Jaising said "this proactive step, applicable to ongoing audits as well, ensures policy alignment, focuses on ease of doing business and reduces unnecessary litigation by maintaining uniformity."

—PTI

'Gold boosts returns & lowers risk, while Bitcoin heightens volatility'

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Gold consistently reduces portfolio volatility while improving returns, even with increased allocation. By simulating portfolio performance with varying allocations of gold (2.5 per cent to 10 per cent), it's evident that the metal bolsters return without adding significant risk, according to World Gold Council.

On the other hand, Bitcoin shows diminishing returns as allocation increases. A 2.5 per cent allocation of bitcoin can enhance risk-adjusted returns, but beyond that, the portfolio's volatility rises, leading to larger drawdowns and lower overall performance.

The data underscores that while bitcoin may offer short-term upside, it introduces risk that erodes its effectiveness as a stable store of value.

Global equities experienced a sharp downturn, with the S&P 500 and NASDAQ dropping over 4 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively, at the peak of the selloff. Amid this volatility, the debate over whether bitcoin can be considered "digital gold" resurfaced, as investors re-examined its place as an inflation hedge and a store of value.

While bitcoin enthusiasts often label the cryptocurrency as "digital gold," a closer examination of the data, particularly during turbulent market periods, challenges this claim.

Gold, a time-tested asset known for its stability, has long been a safe haven during market downturns. Bitcoin, on the other hand, displays characteristics more akin to high-risk technology stocks, making it an unsuitable substitute for gold in times of market stress.

—ANI

Gold, a time-tested asset known for its stability, has long been a safe haven during market downturns *PHOTO: ANI*

'Most blue-collar jobs pay less than Rs 20k per month'

MUMBAI, 17 AUG

Majority of blue-collar jobs in India pay within the salary range of Rs 20,000 or less per month, suggesting that a substantial portion of the workforce is grappling with financial strain, struggling to meet essential needs such as housing, healthcare, and education, a report has said.

Over 57.63 per cent of blue-collar jobs fall within the salary range of Rs 20,000 or less per month, indicating that many workers earn close to the minimum wage, tech-enabled blue collar recruitment platform WorkIndia said in a report.

In addition, the report revealed that about 29.34 per cent of blue-collar jobs are in the moderate earning bracket, with salaries ranging from Rs 20,000-40,000 per month.

The income in this range may cover necessities but it leaves little room for savings or investments, which highlights the economic vulnerability of a large segment of the blue-collar workforce, it added.

Only 2.31 per cent of blue-collar jobs offer salaries exceeding Rs 60,000, which is an extremely small percentage that signifies the scarcity of well-paying opportunities in this sector, it stated.

Positions in this top bracket are typically highly-specialised or involve significant responsibility, making them accessible only to a select few, the report added.

—PTI

PHOTO: PIXABAY

UNDER RS 10,372 CR

Govt seeks AI infra providers for mission

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

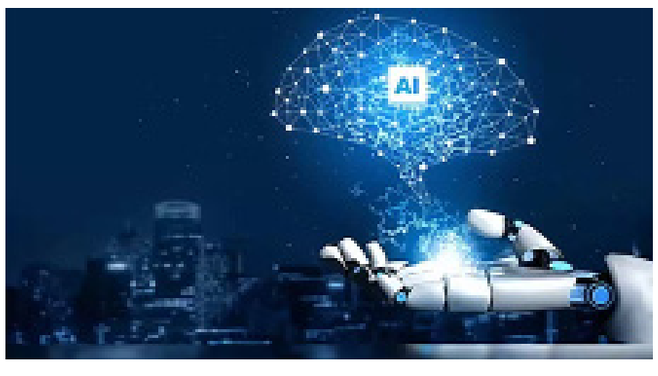
The government has invited bids for the empanelment of entities for providing artificial intelligence services on cloud under the Rs 10,372-crore India AI mission, which was approved by the cabinet in March this year.

The empaneled agencies, like data centers and cloud service providers, will have to provide access to high-speed computing AI infrastructure like graphics processing unit (GPUs), accelerators, Tensor Processing Units (TPUs), storage etc to academia, startups, researchers, government bodies among others at the lowest rate that will be discovered through the bidding process.

Under the IndiaAI Mission, supercomputing capacity, comprising over 10,000 GPUs, will be made available to various stakeholders for creating an AI ecosystem. According to the bid document floated by the Ministry of Electronics and IT (Meity) empaneled agencies will be responsible for offering high-performance computing, network, and storage services that are essential for implementing the activities planned under the IndiaAI Mission, such as the development of indigenous LLMs (large language models like ChatGPT) and AI applications.

"IndiaAI would make the payments for the utilised AI services of the approved projects from the end users to the extent of the approved subsidy," the document said.

The agencies eligible for bids will have to make available 1,000 AI compute units through their cloud service platform, as AI services on cloud within 6 months from the date of signing the agreement with IndiaAI. *—PTI*



The mission was approved by the Cabinet in March *PHOTO: PIXABAY*

Markets will be looking at global cues this week

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

After witnessing a strong rally on Friday, market analysts have expressed a positive outlook in the stock market for the upcoming week starting from Monday.

The Indian stock markets witnessed a strong rally on Friday, with both the NSE Nifty 50 and the BSE Sensex posting significant gains.

On Friday, the Nifty 50 at the National Stock Exchange (NSE) surged by 397.40 points, or 1.65 per cent, to close at 24,541.15, while the Sensex jumped 1,330.96 points, or 1.68 per cent, ending the day at 80,436.85.

As per market analysts, the equity markets are buoyed by favourable global cues and are expected to remain positive in the upcoming weeks.

The market analysts say that in the coming week, investors will be looking at the American Fed comments which is expected to cut policy rates in its next monetary announcement, after the end of the domestic earning season. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

PHOTO: ISL

Derby between Mohun Bagan, East Bengal abandoned

KOLKATA, 17 AUG

The most awaited Group A match of the Durand Cup, featuring Mohun Bagan Super Giant against East Bengal FC, has been abandoned. The match was scheduled to take place at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan in Kolkata on 18 August, 2024, at 7.00 pm. On Saturday, the Durand Cup committee released a statement, "On behalf of the Durand Cup Organizing Committee, this is to regretfully inform you that the final Group A fixture between Mohun Bagan Super Giant and East Bengal FC, scheduled to be played at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan in Kolkata on 18 August, 2024 at 7.00pm, stands abandoned." Mohun Bagan leads Group A with 2 wins and 6 points, boasting a goal difference of 7. *—ANI*

Aditi exits early in HANDA Women's Scottish Open

IRVINE, 17 AUG

Indian golfer Aditi Ashok carded a 3-over 75 in the second round to make an early exit from the ISPS HANDA Women's Scottish Open. Aditi, a five-time winner on the Ladies European Tour, had a 81 in the first round. Aditi had a bogey on the front nine and a double on the back nine and no birdies. The Scottish Open has never been kind to Aditi, who has now missed the cut at the event six times in eight starts since 2017 with a best of T-55 in 2023. She will be back in action at the AIG Women's Open next week a St. Andrews. At the top, Minjee Lee and Megan Khang share the lead on eight-under-par at the midway mark of the event that precedes the AIG Women's Open. Australian star Lee led overnight thanks to an opening round of 67 (-5) at Dundonald Links and she followed that up with a 69 (-3) on day two. *—PTI*

'Eng not naming replacement for Crawley'

LONDON, 17 AUG

Former England stars Nasser Hussain and Michael Atherton said that the Three Lions, have been focusing on young players under the guidance of coach Brendon McCullum, who intends to secure a strong future for the team. These comments come when opener Zak Crawley will not be playing the upcoming series against Sri Lanka from 21 August onwards due to an injury and England has not named a replacement player for him. Hussain stated that the England management under Brendon McCullum would employ selectorial innovation rather than go back to players who have been dropped due to form, such as Alex Lees, Keaton Jennings etc. "With this regime, in selection, they do not want to look back, even with their opening combinations," Hussain said.*—ANI*

Indian Jr squad to take part in badminton c'ships

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

India will be sending a 39-member squad to the Badminton Asia (U-15/U-17) junior championships in Chengdu, China, from 20-25 August with an aim to create a strong pool of players ahead of next year's World Junior Championship, which the country is hosting. The Indian contingent, which was picked after extensive selection trials in Bengaluru, will be led by Gnana Dattu and Tanvi Reddy Andluri in the U-17 category, while Shyam Bindiganavile and Tanvi Patri will be the top singles players in the U-15 category. The Indian contingent left for Chengdu on Saturday after an extensive preparatory camp at the National Centre of Excellence in Guwahati under the watchful eyes of the Indian and foreign coaches. *—PTI*

Vinesh Phogat PHOTO: PTI

I am grateful for this love: Vinesh

Vinesh holds roadshow in Delhi along with Bajrang Punia, Sakshi Malik

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Celebrated wrestler Vinesh Phogat on Saturday received a grand welcome on her return to the country with hundreds of supporters gathering outside the IGI airport, showing immense solidarity with her. A group of 50 supporters followed her jeep. They offered prayers at a temple in Delhi's Dwarka before continuing their journey towards Balali.

Harvinder and Premlata, the brother and mother of former Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat, expressed happiness at her warm welcome back home

Wrestler's mother Premlata told, "She did really well and the country has given her a lot of love and support. Will feed her churma, halwa, chutney, dahi when she comes back home."

Vinesh had stayed back in Paris after challenging her disqualification in the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) and demanding a joint silver. The application was dismissed on Wednesday. "She has come back to her country after such a long time. She is very emotional also. She will spend time with family and calm herself. What Vinesh has done for women is praiseworthy. She might not have received a medal, but she is a champion for us," said Sakshi Malik.

London Olympics bronze medal-winning shooter Gagan Narang, who was the Chef de Mission of the Indian contingent in Paris, called her a champion, posting a photo with Vinesh at the Paris airport. Both of them were on the same flight to Delhi.

"She came as a champion on day 1 into the games village and she will always remain our champion. Sometimes one doesn't need an Olympic medal to inspire a billion dreams.. @vineshphogat you have inspired generations. Salute to your grit," Narang posted on X.

"People are waiting to welcome her to our village. People are excited to meet Vinesh and encourage her," her brother Harvinder Phogat said. *—PTI/ANI*

Wrestler Vinesh Phogat with wrestlers Sakshi Malik, Bajrang Punia, at IGI airport, in New Delhi on Saturday PHOTO: PTI

French league: PSG rout Le Harve FC in record 4-1 win

PARIS, 17 AUG

Paris Saint-Germain got its post-Kylian Mbappé era off a winning start Friday by beating Le Havre 4-1 in its French league opener.

However, the scoreline was more comfortable than the performance suggested, with PSG's last three goals coming in the final five minutes. The Paris club has dominated French soccer with 10 league titles in the last 12 seasons but is rebuilding after Mbappé left to join Real Madrid in the summer. It has one of the youngest squads in the league this season and is betting a new generation can take on more responsibility in Mbappé's absence. It started Friday's match with home-grown 16-year-old Ibrahim Mbaye on the left wing and took the lead after only three minutes thanks to a goal from 23-year-old South Korean forward Lee Kang-in.

Randal Kolo Muani hit the bar after 25 minutes but when a second goal came it was at the other end. Gautier Lloris, brother of France's World Cup winning goalkeeper Hugo, equalized after 48 minutes and only a video review stopped the host from taking the lead after Josué Casimir hit the net five minutes later.

PSG piled on the pressure as the match went on but it wasn't until the 85th minute that Ousmane Dembélé headed the visitors in front again. *—AP*

PSG beat Le Havre 4-1 in its French league opener in Paris on Saturday PHOTO: X@THEFOOTYINSIGHT

EPL OPENER

Joshua Zirkzee celebrates after scoing his debut goal against Fullham on Saturday

Zirkzee scores on debut for Man United in 1-0 win over Fulham

LONDON, 17 AUG

Joshua Zirkzee marked his debut for Manchester United by coming off the bench and scoring an 87th-minute goal to give his team a 1-0 victory over Fulham on the opening night of the Premier League season on Friday.

The Netherlands striker poked out his left foot to guide home a cross by fellow substitute Alejandro Garnacho at Old Trafford. Zirkzee, who joined from Bologna for a reported $47 million last month, was one of three offseason signings to make their first appearances for United, along with defenders Noussair Mazraoui and Matthijs de Ligt.

"To win here in my first home game, and to grab a goal, it couldn't be better," Zirkzee said. Zirkzee, Mazraoui and De Ligt have arrived as part of a $180 million spending spree by the record 20-time champions, a club under new leadership and looking to return to its former glories. Erik ten Hag was retained as manager despite guiding United to an eighth-place finish last season and this was a solid, if unspectacular, start to the campaign by his team. *—AP*

LIVERPOOL AND ARSENAL WIN

LONDON, 17 AUG

There were wins for Liverpool and Arsenal and records for the prolific Mohamed Salah and the enduring James Milner on the first Saturday of the Premier League season.

Liverpool's new era under Arne Slot began with a 2-0 victory over promoted Ipswich, with Salah netting the second to take his tally of goals in the opening round of a Premier League season to nine — breaking a tie he had with English soccer greats Wayne Rooney, Alan Shearer and Frank Lampard.

Arsenal, runner-up in the league for the past two seasons, also won 2-0 at home to Wolverhampton thanks to goals by Kai Havertz and Bukayo Saka. Liverpool and Arsenal are widely expected to be the biggest threats to champion Manchester City in its bid for a record-extending fifth straight English top-flight title. City opens its title defense at Chelsea on Sunday, with the season having been launched Friday by Manchester United beating Fulham 1-0.

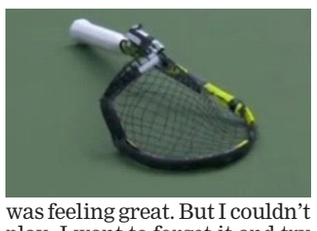
Newcastle overcame a 28th-minute red card to Fabian Schar for a headbutt to beat Southampton 1-0 through Joelinton's goal and Everton also had a player sent off, Ashley Young, in its 3-0 loss at home to Brighton.The team featured James Milner, who — at 38 — was starting his 23rd season, beating the record of 22 he held jointly with Man United great Ryan Giggs. Milner is seven years older than his manager, Fabian Hurzeler, who had a winning start to English soccer after moving from German team St. Pauli. *—PTI*

Alcaraz smashes racket in 3-set loss to Monfils

CINCINNATI, 17 AUG

Carlos Alcaraz repeatedly smashed his racket on the court in a rare show of frustration, and the four-time Grand Slam winner fell to Gael Monfils 4-6, 7-6 (7-5), 6-4 at the Cincinnati Open.

In a match that was suspended by rain on Thursday night with the players in a second-set tiebreaker, the 37-year-old Monfils advanced by taking the last two sets from the second-seeded Alcaraz, who called the loss his "worst match." "I felt like it was the worst match that I've ever played on my career," Alcaraz said. "I've been practicing really well. I



was feeling great. But I couldn't play. I want to forget it and try to move on to New York."

The US Open begins there on 26 August. Trailing 3-1 in the tiebreaker when the match was halted, Alcaraz was hoping for a reset when play resumed Friday. But, the No. 3 player in the ATP rankings wasn't able to control his emotions.

"It never happened before, because I could control those feelings," Alcaraz said. "Today I couldn't. I was feeling that I was not playing any kind of tennis. It was really frustrating for me. At some point, I didn't want to be on the court anymore." Alcaraz was playing his first match since earning a silver medal at the Paris Olympics after losing to Novak Djokovic, who also beat him last year in the Cincinnati final. No. 3 Aryna Sabalenka also advanced with a 7-5, 6-2 victory over Elina Svitolina, but No. 5 Jasmine Paolini, the runner-up at the French Open and Wimbledon, lost to Mirra Andreeva 3-6, 6-3, 6-2. *—AP*

PHOTO: @MANOJTIWARIIND

Brit legend Wilson applies for post of shooting coach

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Legendary double trap marksman Peter Wilson of Great Britain, who guided country-mate Nathan Hales to trap gold at the recently-concluded Paris Olympics, has shown interest in the Indian team coaching job and wants to train the shooters for the 2028 Los Angeles Games.

Wilson, 37, holds the world record in double trap and took up shooting after a snow-boarding accident left him unable to play cricket.

After double trap was removed from the Olympic curriculum, Wilson started coaching the Great Britain team in trap, with the crowning glory coming in Paris where his ward Nathan won gold with an Olympic record to break a 12-year-long wait for the country in the event. *—PTI*

Peter Wilson PHOTO: AP

We badly need facilities for women athletes: Nadeem

KARACHI, 17 AUG

Arshad Nadeem, the javelin throw gold medallist in the recently-concluded Paris Games, said Pakistani women athletes should be given modern facilities so that they can perform at the highest level.

Since returning home with Pakistan's first gold in the Olympics since 1984, Nadeem has been showered with cash prizes worth around 280 million, cars and other gifts. In the latest instance, the Governor Punjab on Saturday gave him a cash prize of two million rupees and a car.

But beyond such personal gifts, Nadeem wanted the government to fulfil his request for a modernised track and field stadium and a university for women in his hometown – Mian Channu. "We badly need facilities for our women and even men to acquire higher education in our area and nowadays young athletes need to be given the best facilities," Nadeem said on the ARY news channel.

Arshad Nadeem PHOTO: PTI

Nadeem, who appeared on the show with his wife Rashida, was also asked about the buffalo gifted to him by his father-in-law for winning the Olympic gold medal. Rashida said she knew about Nadeem's injury problems before the Olympics but kept it away from other family members. *—PTI*

EYES ON DIAMOND LEAGUE

Let's just leave it to the gods: Chopra on 90m

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Having missed out on breaching the elusive 90m mark at the Paris Games, two-time Olympic medallist Neeraj Chopra has left that widely debated matter "to the gods".

After all, Chopra has been chasing that milestone for years and the wait got longer when his only legal throw of 89.45m got him a silver at the Paris Olympics earlier this month.

A back-to-back medal at the Summer Games was a monumental feat for an Indian athlete but it was way short of Arshad Nadeem's sensational 92.97m that comfortably secured a historic gold for the Pakistani.

Nursing a long-standing groin injury, Chopra managed to be on the podium and now he will be seen in the Lausanne Diamond League starting 22 August.

Neeraj Chopra will be seen in the Lausanne Diamond League starting 22 August PHOTO: PTI

After a busy couple of days post the Olympic final on 8 August, Chopra started training in Switzerland and is determined to finish the season on a high despite being restricted by the injury.

Following the season-ending Diamond League in Brussels from 13-14 September, Chopra will consult the doctors on his groin injury with surgery being the most likely option. The 26-year-old has been managing the injury since winning the gold in the World Championships last year.

With Arshad producing an Olympic record throw in the final, Chopra needed to up his game but he said he could not do that because of his physical state.

He needs to make a few technical tweaks in his game.

Chopra needs to finish in the top-six of Diamond League Meetings series to qualify for the season finale in Brussels. "We need to spot talent better to become sporting powerhouse," he said. *—PTI*